WHY DOES NOT GOD INTERVENE ?

AND OTHER QUESTIONS

BY

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TO MY SON

ROBERTSON BALLARD

WITH THE PRAYER

THAT HE MAY PROVE WORTHY OF HIS

GREAT NAMESAKE:

AND MAY BE TRUE TO THE PRINCIPLES

OUTLINED IN THESE PAGES

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PREFACE

The questions considered in this volume are but a few out of the unnumbered host which have always exercised men's minds in regard to religion. Some of them are very ancient, others more modern, all are such as may be met with anywhere and everywhere to-day. They all demand fair if not fresh consideration in the light of our present knowledge. No one needs to be told that Christian faith does not consist merely in answered questions. But very many who are comfortably housed in the Churches do need to be reminded that questions of all kinds are agitating, if not preventing, Christian belief, to an extent never before known in Christian history. And for the three plain reasons, that there are more questioners; there is more ability as well as more liberty to question; and there is much more both around and within us all which drives men to question what has hitherto been generally accepted. The *ipse dixit* of the priest no longer counts for any-

thing. Even the authority of the Church is set aside, or set at nought. Both these former methods of silencing inquiry have had their day and ceased to be. The modern world is coming back in religion to the standpoint of the greatest Rationalist who ever lived, whose claim to be heard and obeyed was —"Yea, and why even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?" Whatever may be the value of intuition, simple trust, spiritual experience, upon the method endorsed by that question of Jesus, and upon no other whatever, turns the future of religion for humanity.

"What is right," is confessedly a great and complex matter, requiring for its valid consideration all that can be learnt from history, science, philosophy, criticism, and practical life. No one age can settle it for another. Even if adequate answers to all our questionings could be fully supplied to-day, they would not necessarily suffice for the next generation. It is indeed not the fact of the answer, but the act of answering which contributes most really to moral character, alike in a man and for an age. It is worse than useless for believers in these days to lament the passing of the "ages of faith," when no questions were asked, and no one was put upon his mettle to answer them. The cry for the recurrence

of such a time is childish without being childlike; for childhood, we know well, flourishes best in a veritable atmosphere of questions. The sigh for a bygone unquestioning spiritual placidity, which shall have no difficulties and feel no doubts, but simply walk with sweet content "in the old paths," is as unworthy as futile. It is as impracticable as to desire that this our island shall not be broken up by railways, or everywhere intersected by roads and by-roads, but remain in the natural simplicity which the ancient Britons knew. Such a land might suit the naturalist and please the antiquarian, but modern populations could not live upon it.

There is, after all, something better than the sweet simplicity of an unquestioning faith, viz. the ideal which the Apostle to whom Christianity owes most set before the Corinthians—"Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all you do be done in love." A child in arms is truly a beautiful sight, but woe to the race if its babes do not grow into something better and stronger. A man who merits the name should be able and willing rather to carry others, than be himself everlastingly carried. So, in our day, the great need of Church and world alike is not more "children" of God—for there is a sadly real sense in which we have too

many such already. It is rather men and women of God who are needed; able first to stand alone, and then to help others; evading no honest question; denying no facts; shirking no real difficulty; neglecting no plain duty; shunning no rightful burden. But these cannot be grown upon mere doxologies. They are never developed by the complacent reiteration of pious platitudes. Their souls have to be braced by cold winds of difficulty, and their minds kept alert by shocks of questioning. Fightings without and fears within constitute the atmosphere in which their strength is gained. Anguished perplexity of mind and bitter disappointment at heart are found in the Gethsemane through which they have to pass, before honest doubt can issue in strong and potent faith. Yet these are they who, more than any others, are now wanted for the hastening of that better day which any real Gospel must promise humanity. A day, that is, when the Father's will shall be done on earth as it is in Heaven, by giving every human child at least a chance to make this life worth having, and thence another life worth hoping for.

On the great themes specified, the following pages are merely suggestive. Exhaustive treatment of any one of them would require the whole volume to

itself. Some little repetition of main points has been unavoidable, in order to make each section complete in itself. It is hoped that this will not demand large apology. The various discussions do not profess to be theological, though theology cannot be excluded. They are not even original, for indebtedness to others runs through the whole. Should it be asked, as well it may, what then is the use of another book on such well-worn themes, if it is neither original nor exhaustive, the humble rejoinder must be that suggestion may be helpful where complete solution is impossible. Every such suggestion, made in good faith, is at least a contribution to the growth of the truth which is increasingly needed in order to bring about the greatest blessing of the greatest number.

Dr. W. N. Clarke has well said in his recent volume on "The Christian Doctrine of God"—a work to which no greater praise can be accorded than to say that it is on a level with his former "Outline of Christian Theology"[1]—"The moral question of God and the world will always remain more or less

[1] With deepest regret I learn, as these pages are passing through the press, that this noble Christian teacher has passed from our human midst. If my poor words shall serve no other purpose than to direct others to the study of his invaluable works, as specified, I shall be sufficiently rewarded.

a mystery to men. Short solutions of it have abounded. But they are too short and easy." No such vain hope as a "short and easy" solution is here contemplated. It will more than suffice if only some few fellow-questioners are helped, and fellow-workers enheartened; whilst honest doubt is frankly met, and the unbelief which does not want to believe is ruled out of account. The most accomplished theologian is but a feeble groper amidst overwhelming immensities, and according to the degree of his intellectual honesty he will acknowledge in the end,

> So runs my dream, but what am I?
> An infant crying in the night,
> An infant crying for the light,
> And with no language but a cry.

Those who most sincerely believe that Jesus Christ is in very deed the much-longed-for "Light of the world," will most truly learn from Him genuine humility amid their rejoicing, and boundless charity along with their well-grounded hope.

FRANK BALLARD.

HARROGATE, 1912.

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WHY DOES NOT GOD INTERVENE?

"I remember God and am disquieted."—PSALM LXXVII. 3.

"Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself."—ISAIAH XLV. 15.

"Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died."
—JOHN XI. 37.

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"
—MATT. XXVII. 46.

"These five years have been years of the most ruthless oppression. A Russian of the Russians, M. Stolypin has assailed every one of the minor races of the empire. The destruction of the Finnish Constitution is but one instance, though the most conspicuous and offensive. In Russia itself, however, as the revolution subsided, the repression became more fierce. The field courts-martial were kept hard at work, and every day some score of people were hanged within twenty-four hours of a mock trial. Hosts of men and women were sent to Siberia and Arctic Russia by mere administrative order without trial, and without even a knowledge of their offence. Not merely students and 'intellectuals,' but workmen and peasants were dispatched to a living grave, simply because they were suspected of 'disturbing' opinion. The prisons were full to overflowing, and their inmates huddled in the corridors and passages were swept away by disease. In 1909 the gaols of Russia, constructed to hold only 170,000, contained more than 180,000 people."—"DAILY NEWS."

"Without being a sceptic or an agnostic, one may feel that there are questions in the world which never will be answered on this side of the grave, perhaps not on the other. It was the saying of an old Greek, in the very dawn of thought, that men would meet with many surprises when they were dead. Perhaps one will be the recollection that, when we were here, we thought the ways of Almighty God so easy to argue about."
—DEAN CHURCH.

"Science seems to me to teach, in the highest and strongest manner, the great truth which is embodied in the Christian conception of entire surrender to the will of God. Sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abysses nature leads, or you shall learn nothing."
—T. H. HUXLEY, "Life and Letters".

CHAPTER I

WHY DOES NOT GOD INTERVENE?

It is not so long since, at one of our largest railway stations, a father in a paroxysm of rage, flung his child before the wheels of an incoming train, with the ghastly result that all four limbs had to be amputated in the discharge of the surgeons' sacred duty of preserving life. Whether it would not have been more humane to let the poor little life ebb out under an anæsthetic, may here be left an open question. The unutterable horror of the tragedy remains appalling beyond tears, wicked beyond invective. Yet to say that it is harrowing, is far from the whole truth. It is much worse. It is typical. It is but a gruesome pointer to all those other tragedies of earth which equal it in ghastly quality, whilst in quantity they are incalculable. Who of us dare face them in all their horrible reality? Can we be surprised that the unbeliever, possessed full often of quite as keen a mind and tender a heart as the believer, should ask with sincere insistence,—Where was the God of love to permit such fiendish cruelty to be wrought upon a helpless child? "Would you," he demands, "if you are a father, allow one of your children so to treat another?" Then further, whilst our tongues are tied by saddened perplexity, he bids us not forget all the rest. As if we ever could! Who—in days when newspapers live by circulating with utmost haste all earth's most dreadful happenings—needs reminding of the tragedies that stand out in such lurid pre-eminence?

How can we dismiss from thought the recent burning of the vessel on an American lake, wherein hundreds of Sunday School children perished who were assembled under the very assurance that God loved them every one? Or is that great country ever likely to forget how some of its noblest men have died? Why indeed, they may be forgiven for asking, did not God intervene to turn aside the bullet that ended the noble work of Abraham Lincoln; or why not protect the scarcely less lofty patriotism of Garfield and McKinley? Or, if we go a little farther back in the history of another land, and dare to think of Cawnpore, is there an Englishman living who does not shudder at mention of that name, or who would not certainly have given himself and all he had to have averted its indescribable hell of woe? Yet it cannot be denied that the massacre of St. Bartholomew, in the name of the Christian religion, was even worse. Whilst as regards the quantity and quality of human suffering brought about by man's inhumanity to man, even that dire event pales before the recollection of the bloody persecutions, again and again renewed, by which pagan Rome sought to destroy early Christianity. As for the immeasurable horrors of the wars which have made earth's fairest fields into a revolting slaughter-house, nothing need be said, because nothing can be said that even approaches to the truth. It was most nearly summed up in a word by one of the greatest generals, when he declared with awful simplicity—"war is hell".

When all that is here suggested is honestly faced, even for the briefest moment, we cannot wonder that one of the most thoughtful writers on religion in modern light, should speak of the dire total as constituting "the great objection" to Christian belief. "Broadly stated," he says only too truly, "the

objection is that this world which we know, is a very hard world in which to believe in the good God whom the Christian doctrine sets forth as the one God of all. Experience cries out against the belief. Facts condemn it."[1] Of a truth it is easy enough in human life to play the gnat or the butterfly, as it is in the world of mind to be content with the "topmost froth of thought," and in religion to be an "incorrigible optimist" by looking persistently only on the sunny side of things. But quotations are not needed to remind us that prophets, and seers, and psalmists, and apostles, have shown a truer and therefore nobler spirit. They have "faced the spectres of the mind" without flinching, and have laid them with open not with blinded eyes. When everything is said, the chief virtue of all is honesty. Be it bright or dark, truth is that which must be faced, if manhood, let alone religion, is to be maintained. No man can be honest in face of the plain facts of human existence without being, sometimes at least, shocked beyond expression, and staggered almost to overwhelming.

The problems involved are, indeed, in a very real sense, worse for the believer than for the unbeliever. What did the Psalmist mean when he groaned aloud —"I remember God, and am disquieted"? The general tenor of religion, even in his day, was rather that one should be quieted by the thought of a God who would take care of the righteous and punish the wicked. Yet the Psalmist did but voice the heart-wrung cry of myriads since, whose worst difficulties have arisen from their belief in God. It is the remembrance of God which constitutes the very core of the tragic problem. For as a modern theologian has well put it—"Between freedom and fate,

[1] Dr. W. N. Clarke, "The Christian Doctrine of God," p. 431.

between a personal God and blind chance, between faith in prayer and trust to luck, we are bound to choose. Only the short-sighted and superficial mind can find a resting-place between these two opinions." Plainly, if chance and luck rule the universe, there can be no shock or difficulty concerning anything that happens. For the unexpected is in such case necessarily the expected. But faith in God inevitably brings an expectation of its own. Belief in the Divine Fatherhood cannot but compel the expectation that God will behave towards men as a father should. Our own fatherhood ever begets such an expectation from our children. If a father be walking with his child beside a river, and the little one fall in, every man with a heart would expect the father to plunge in to the rescue. Refusal would be pronounced inhuman. Still further, if by holding the child's hand the father could prevent the falling in altogether, should we not all expect him so to do?

Yet what do we find in actual human life? On the one hand, from the Christian standpoint, we have Christ's own emphatic assurance—" the very hairs of your head are all numbered "—an unmistakably far-reaching figure of speech. On the other hand, we are surrounded, buffeted, staggered, overwhelmed, with such palpable contradictions to this assurance, that we are left practically shorn of its comfort, and sometimes hopelessly wrecked on rocks of doubt and difficulty. The famous autobiography of Mr. John Stuart Mill does but express the dread nemesis of faith which has happened to very many, from contemplation of the actual facts of human existence. It cannot be denied that these facts exhibit instances in which every reasonable expectation of what omnipotent love would do, both to prevent evil and to ensure good, appears to be contradicted. It is

equally certain that this apparent contradiction must and does weigh upon the minds and hearts of men. The Psalms are our witness how keenly those who believed in God felt it in olden time. It is small wonder that in our day the broader outlook, along with the intensified sensitiveness of advanced civilization, should cause the modern man to lose heart of hope and make shipwreck of faith, in face of the world-wide problem of pain and evil.

What then can be said from the standpoint of belief, in unevasive answer to the plain question—Why does not God intervene to prevent the evil and bring to pass the good? At least something must be said. "No presentation of the Christian doctrine of God can be satisfactory, that does not consider the great objection," truly writes Dr. Clarke. For men of mind who are warranted in demanding reasons for faith, as well as for those who do not wear their hearts upon their sleeve but are none the less troubled within, some answer must be found, if belief in a Heavenly Father is to remain as the distinctive Good News of the Christian religion.

The first step towards any such answer is the sharp differentiation in thought of the problem of evil from the practically inseparable mystery of pain. It is quite impossible to disentangle them in daily life, or to keep them long apart in earnest scrutiny. But in order to clear the way for certain great consequences, we may and we must always distinguish between the suffering which involves, and that which does not involve, the human will. The former may, in general, be termed evil, the latter, pain. Evil, to be evil, must be what is known as "moral evil"; i.e. it must and does involve the action of a will distinct from the divine will, free enough to act independently of and contrary to the divine. Only such definite action, consciously contrary to known right,

can constitute evil as distinct from pain. Unmeasured confusion of thought and speech is continually caused by failing to maintain this distinction.

The question may indeed be asked, why an omnipotent and all-loving God does not intervene in regard to both. But the answers which are warranted by reason and faith are in each case so different, that it is really necessary first to confine attention to the former, as being so much the greater that the latter becomes small by comparison. The problem of evil is, in fact, doubly greater than the mystery of pain. For even if men are irreligious enough to care only for the latter, on philanthropic lines, it must be affirmed, roundly but with tragic truth, that seven-tenths of the suffering of humanity is due to moral evil. Eliminate this, and earth would be almost a Paradise. But until theism is proved irrational, the yet deeper mystery remains as to how benevolent Omnipotence can create or permit the existence of beings capable of thwarting its own unmistakable purposes. "We cannot assert," says a modern thinker, "in the same breath, the reality of evil and the fact of creation by an omnipotent and benevolent being."[1] Whether we can assert it or not, two things are clear. Evil is here in our midst; and the only God worth thinking of is One who is omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent. What we are driven then to ask is—Why such a Being, if He exists, does not intervene to prevent all the welter of human woe which has been known in the past, is ever continuing in the present, and shows little sign of diminishing for the future, through the wrongful exercise of the marvellous powers with which man has been endowed.

(1) If succinctness could be sufficiently clear, the

[1] Mr. St. George Stock, "Hibbert Journal," July, 1904.

question why, in such cases, does not God intervene, may be answered in a word. Because He cannot. We may say it with bated breath, for reverence's sake; none the less it is the plain even if it be the awful truth. In cases beyond all enumeration it is the only explanation, alike of the misery of men and the sorrow of God. Unbelief, confessedly, is not concerned with the latter. But Christian theism is; and can never afford to leave it out of account. Jesus wept, we are told, as He looked upon Jerusalem. Unless His tears were maudlin mockery, they signified not only His sorrow but His impotence. "How often would I, and ye would not." If, then, He truly represents to men the Fatherhood of God, divine impotence and divine sorrow in face of most human woe, are equally real and inseparable. And the reason of both is in the simple fact that men are men. Men, not marionettes; persons, not things; human beings, as distinct from animals. How men have become such, does not here concern us. Evolution, as the method of creation, no more affects the reality of human free agency, than the undoubted derivation of each individual from a fœtus in embryo affects the intelligence of the reader of these pages. Nor is it at all required at this juncture, that we should enter into the intricacies of what is known as the "free will controversy". Our own consciousness is sufficient witness that, in Mr. Mallock's words, "The individual spirit, though evolved from universal spirit, and dependent on it, nevertheless possesses an autonomous moral will of its own". Then the "crux of theism"—as he also puts it—is to show "that the universal spirit, though producing individual spirits under conditions seemingly incompatible with anything but the misery of most of them, is nevertheless consumed with an equal love for all".[1]

[1] "Hibbert Journal," April, 1905.

Such a statement of the case is indeed pitifully one-sided, and so far false. But for the moment we may accept the "seemingly" as sufficient pretext for such assumption. We then face all that is real in "the misery of most" men, with the plain assertion that it constitutes no "crux" at all. For it is always in spite of, not because of, the "equal love for all" which Christian theism assumes. No emphasis can be sufficient to put upon this distinction. Allowing for the imperfection of inevitable anthropomorphisms, it is enough to say that the helplessness of God is the real and valid explanation of His non-intervention in most human misery. The usual and hackneyed reference to omnipotence is altogether irrelevant. For it never was, is, or will be, the part of omnipotence to attempt the unthinkable. Granted that men are sufficiently free to be moral, i.e. to know right from wrong, and be capable of doing either, and it ceases to be in the power of omnipotence to prevent the doing of wrong, just as truly as to compel the doing of right. For compelled right is as unthinkable as a prevented free being. Either suggestion involves flat contradiction in terms. It is open to any genuine thinker to ask why moral beings should be created. But it is not open to him, or any one possessed of reason, to demand that a moral being should be "restrained" from evil, for that would be tantamount to insisting that a round should at the same time be square.

Take but one common instance out of the terrible mass. Mr. W. E. Gladstone was no blatant temperance orator, but he declared before the highest court in this land, with a full sense of his responsibility upon him, that "greater calamities are inflicted upon mankind by intemperance, than by the three great historical scourges, war, pestilence, and famine". Well might he add that this fact is "the measure of

our discredit and disgrace". But where discredit and disgrace apply, divine intervention is ruled out of thought. Disgrace can only attach to a free agent. And a free agent cannot be compelled. If a man wills to fling away body and soul, life and love, for drink, or lust, or greed, God could only preventively intervene by destroying his manhood. But such intervention would be sheer self-contradiction on His part, and this human reason can never have any right to expect from the Divine nature.

(2) If the above be true, logically no further explanation is called for. If God cannot intervene to prevent human evil with its consequent suffering, without contradicting Himself, no rational thought can insist upon that. But the very fact that it is so, merits further consideration. To a really troubled mind, such a plea might savour too much of a logic-chopping subterfuge. It might also be suggested that even if the will of a moral being cannot be constrained, yet after the exercise of that will, loving omnipotence might intervene to prevent the dire consequences which naturally follow upon evil volition. Could not God who, we say, is immanent in all nature, have caused the poor child to have fallen out of the reach of the engine's pitiless wheels? In view of Abraham Lincoln's nobility of character and devotion to justice, could not God easily have deflected the murderer's bullet? Could He not have smitten the butchers of Cawnpore with paralysis? Could He not have repeated on behalf of the innocent Christians thrown to Nero's lions, what is said to have happened in the case of Daniel? In a word, could He not always intervene between a wicked will and its natural results of unmerited suffering? Could He not have rescued Jesus from Calvary?

To all which, the honest unevasive answer must be—Yes, He could. There is nothing unthinkable

in such intervention. Even if every such interference with the natural consequences of human volition definitely involved a miracle, it is only a belated science which talks now about the impossibility of the miraculous. The question in this case ceases to be what omnipotence could do, and becomes rather what omniscient benevolence should do.

Two things at least are clear on the threshold of any rational reply: (i) That we are living under a régime of law. (ii) That, on the whole, the laws which hem us in on every side are working for our good. These are plain facts which require no argument in their support. The laws of nature—if they are laws at all and not mere casual sequences—are the manifestations of the will of an all-immanent God. That He is also transcendent enough to be able to counteract them, should He see good reason to do so, may be conceded. But to ordain for high and holy purpose that such and such results should follow such and such conduct, and then intervene perpetually to prevent those very results, would again be unmistakable self-contradiction on His part, which may, as such, be dismissed from thought. God who is always expressing Himself in laws cannot rationally be called upon to exhibit Himself by contradicting those laws. Whether there may ever be special cases—such as "miracles"—in which He may, in ways unknown to us, overrule what we know as ordinary natural law, for a transcendental purpose, may here be left an open question. Such exceptions could only confirm the benevolence of the rule for all humanity, that we should be under law, not chaos, nor caprice. For laws are so designed and may so be known, appreciated, and obeyed, as to ensure the greatest happiness of the greatest number. But government by ceaseless interferences could yield no rule of conduct, no

guarantee of good from virtuous living, any more than warning of ill from the pursuit of vice. Such conditions might constitute an environment suited to the lower animals, but could never conduce to the advancement of moral beings. If human life is to be made worth living, certainly if there is to be any prospect whatever of upward evolution, nothing is more needed than the solemn reminder of the reality and resistlessness of those natural laws which serve all men to the uttermost when they obey, but ruthlessly punish when they disobey. It is absolutely necessary for our very existence, and even more so for our highest well-being, that we should understand, and if need be learn through suffering, that in this universe there is a mightier Will than ours. And that this Will is as righteous as powerful, as awful as benevolent, and can no more be trifled with than turned from its purposes of love towards us. God does not, therefore, intervene between us and the consequences of our volitions, because there is something for our whole race, better than intervention, and that is moral government.

(3) It is only under moral government from which, as the all-prevailing rule, intervention is excluded, that the most noble and most precious element in our being can be developed, viz. the possibility of moral character. On a smaller scale, which is none the less true for being homely, we see it without room for doubt. Why does not every father intervene to prevent his boy at school from being punished when he has done wrong? We need not pause to ask whether any wise and benevolent schoolmaster would tolerate such intervention. Would any true father desire it? We know that he would not. And we know why. Any intervention between wrongdoing and its

consequence, would practically reduce right to a level with wrong. In so doing it would annihilate the educational value of the school for all connected with it, besides making character impossible for the individual boy. To call such an intervention, therefore, love, would be but to blaspheme. It would be hate, not love; and would bring no blessing, but a curse. There ought to be no question that the noblest element in human nature is the possibility of making moral character. This of necessity involves the possibility of doing wrong no less than right. Whence it cannot but follow that the only way of keeping a moral being from the wrong and training for the right, is to attach penalty which cannot be avoided to the former, and reward which cannot be mistaken to the latter. What may be in other worlds, we neither know nor need to know. In this world, human nature being what it is, the truth is too plain to call for discussion, that only by means of a moral law which first bids us not be deceived—"God is not mocked, whatever a man sows that will he also reap"—and then carries itself out in unprevented and unpreventable penalty when violated, can there be any such upward evolution of character as will lift and keep humanity above brutality.

(4) The fullest appreciation of this principle is perhaps only derived from taking large views of human affairs, and surveying on a broad scale the issues involved. That is really the lesson of the whole Bible, more especially the Old Testament, when rightly understood But there are object lessons in overwhelming abundance to substantiate it every day we live. The popular notion that a world entirely devoid of pain, and without any possibility of evil, would be a great improvement upon this of which we form part, is but a superficial

and childish delusion. Its utmost result would be a world full of non-moral animals. These might, indeed, after their fashion, be happy; but a century of such happiness would not deserve to be compared with one hour of the moral triumph which is possible to every true man.

It is often said, with much emphasis, that moral evil is a vast and insoluble mystery. But there are good reasons for affirming that it is not, after all, so great as it seems. The question is ultimately simple, viz. is a race of moral beings higher, nobler, worthier, or not, than a non-moral race? If not, there is nothing left to discuss. But if it be, then the possibility of morals must involve the liberty to do wrong as well as right. Prof. Huxley's well-known offer, "The only freedom I care about is the freedom to do right, the freedom to do wrong I am ready to part with on the cheapest terms to any one who will take it of me"—would be sheer self-contradiction if it were serious, as the erudite Professor well knew. If, then, to justify real benevolence, divine intervention to prevent the natural consequences of wrongdoing were required in any one case, it would be equally so in all. But if in all, there is an end of moral government, together with all its possibilities of character-development in the education of a race.

The modern Eddyism which so unwarrantably calls itself "Christian Science," would settle every difficulty by a very simple formula. "God is all; and God is good; therefore all is good. Therefore, of course, there is no evil." It would be difficult to frame a more misleading statement, or to say which is the more false, the premiss or the conclusion. Each is hopelessly wrecked upon the rock of fact. Assuredly honest observation makes us know, with only too tragic sureness, that there is evil in this

world. And undeniable experience also asserts that God is not "all," so long as I am I. For God is not I, any more than I am God. Yet further; the true assertion that God is good, carries with it no warrant whatever for avowing that goodness towards humanity means always the prevention of suffering. Personal experience, no less than world-wide and age-long observation, shows unmistakably that suffering may not only accompany but even be the means of the highest and noblest moral character.

(5) But the very largest scale on which the problem of divine non-intervention can be viewed in this world, is far from large enough to do justice to the truth. The solidarity of this little planet of ours with the whole solar system is not more surely an axiom of science, than it is a principle of Christian philosophy that our moral history is bound up with that of the universe at large. There is no small danger of a far too narrow terrestrial provincialism, when we set ourselves to think of the vast problems of divine government. If God be God—the only God worth thinking of, according to Christian theism—He is the same throughout the hundred million suns to which astronomy points, whose distances from us make our reason reel, as in our earthly midst. The moral law which rests ultimately on His holy will, must be everywhere and evermore the same, whatever enlargements or modifications of natural law may be possible under conditions unknown to us. This world's order, therefore, alone, can never give us the truly complete view of the divine government. That which seems to us in the dim light of this terrestrial speck a contradiction to divine benevolence, may well, in fuller light of the universe of suns, be seen to be a necessary part of a larger order as far beyond our present powers to apprehend, let alone criticize, as the complicated

extent of some vast modern business is beyond those of its owner's little child. The very least that can be said, on rational equally with religious grounds, is that in this case suspense of judgment must ever befit us, rather than hasty and sweeping condemnation. The old seer's words take on to-day an emphasis of which he never dreamed—"Lo these are but the outskirts of His ways; and how small a whisper do we hear of Him. But the thunder of His power who can understand."

(6) In the end, however, it must be frankly acknowledged that the question why does not God intervene to prevent wrongdoing or its consequences, becomes an individual problem. We talk of crowds, and masses, and the race, but from the standpoint of sin and suffering there are no such things. A sinning crowd is as unthinkable as a suffering race. For good or ill, for weal or woe, it is irresistibly appointed to human beings to live apart. To each man, each woman, each child, there is a world of self-consciousness as absolutely distinct from all other as real in itself. The planets that compose our solar system are not more discrete, than is the whole experience of a father from that of his child, or of a friend from that of his friend. Husband and wife, brother and sister, lover and beloved, may embody the very closest of earthly relationships. But they are separate units of consciousness which never fuse, nor ever really enter into each other's world. "Every heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joys." Never were truer words uttered either by poet or philosopher. It is here that all questions relating to the interposition or non-interposition of providence find us most keenly. It is here that "the providence of interventions" comforts us one moment, only to crush us the next. But as

we all know that painful experience is likely to be more intensely felt and longer remembered than pleasurable, it is the more necessary to point out that besides the acknowledged inexplicableness of some individual cases, there is a real element of inspiration even in the providence of non-interventions. At first glance it may well seem otherwise. The truth that "God is no respecter of persons," has a tragically bewildering side to it. In well-chosen words the late Dr. W. N. Clarke thus expressed it:—

> "Endeavours to interpret life as under a providence of interventions do not satisfy the hope that has been built upon them. It does not prove to be true that occurrences can be relied upon to accord with the character of those whom they affect. Taking the world through, one man is not safer than another from lightning or disease, except as intelligent precaution renders him so. Both the equalities and the inequalities of life refuse to be classified in terms of moral character. Many a heart has been well-nigh broken in coming to the point of making the acknowledgment, but at last it has to be acknowledged that the doctrine of a protective and punitive providence does not correspond to the facts of life. Nothing but the most flagrant injustice is the result, if we attempt to explain the misfortunes of life as punitive. The theory does not work."

The classical comment upon this true protest is, of course, the book of Job. But no commentary is needed, for we all see it and feel it. Jesus Himself acknowledged it in regard to those "on whom the tower in Siloam fell," as well as the Galileans who were Pilate's victims. It is staggering, overwhelm-

ing beyond all expression, to remember that each and every wife and mother in Cawnpore's awful hell of carnage, possessed an individual separate consciousness of suffering which could not possibly be assigned as punishment for wrong. To call to mind the innocence of every man and woman and child savagely despatched in St. Bartholomew's infernal slaughter, to say nothing of other religious persecutions, blinds our eyes and crushes our hearts.

Yet if for a moment we can waive the horror of it all, nothing whatever is left to disprove the counter truth to that enunciated above. If God be no respecter of persons, it is only and truly because He is the respecter of all persons. Upon this Jesus put His utmost emphasis, making it as weighty as possible by comparison with sheep, and sparrows, and lilies. The providence of non-interventions which seems so cruelly to ignore the preciousness of the individuality of the few in whom we are interested, is really all the time solemnly affirming the preciousness of individuality throughout the human race. For the laws which govern human lives without exceptions or interference, are all of them the expression of the care of God for every one. In that care, so far as natural laws are concerned, the pauper has an equal share with the king; the life and health of every child in the slums is as much an object of solicitude, on the part of an all-immanent God, as that of any prince. Were it not for the interference of human selfishness, all there is in the laws of nature that makes for health and happiness, would always be at the service of every ignorant rustic, as utterly as of the most accomplished man of science. Thus, whilst providence by interposition would respect the few, government by law respects all. The magnanimity of God is always in evidence, as Jesus said, in the sun which shines "on the evil as well as

on the good," and the rain which falls alike "on the just and on the unjust". Human individuality is thus impartially consecrated by the laws which treat all men alike; whilst occasional intervention would but spoil some at the expense of all the rest. But as favouritism in a family tends to discord and depression, whilst the love which treats all with equal favour, in so doing puts highest value upon each, so under moral government by means of natural law, has every man, simply as man, the right to think of himself, apart from any other, as the genuine object of divine sympathy and loving solicitude.

Yet who does not know that it is one thing in our calmer, painless moments, to think carefully and logically, whilst it is quite another thing when unexpected tragedy shocks us into feeling deeply and bitterly. It is only too true in regard to the doctrine of an intervening Providence that "if we have found a case that seems perfectly to prove the doctrine, the next hour may bring us one that just as clearly disproves it". For every sincere and sensitive mind there are still, as there always have been, cases of individual innocent suffering, undeserved calamity, premature death of such as were undoubtedly most needed—with the perpetuation of the lives of useless imbeciles or healthy villains—which bring us to the same verge of despair as the Psalmist, when he cried "As for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped".[1] The contradiction to all that sincere belief had led us to expect has been so apparently ruthless, that we have felt again the ancient anguish—"Will the Lord cast off for ever? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" No Christian man or

[1] Cf. the whole of Psalm LXXIII.

woman has probably lived to middle age without becoming closely acquainted with instances of individual pain and loss, calamity and trouble, suffering and death, for which no honest explanation whatever on moral lines could be suggested. Time is often the only healer of such mysteries. They baffle all our thought, and make our tenderest words of sympathy seem mockery. In such darkness that can be felt, many of these life tragedies must be left. Here and now we can do nothing with them, save imitate the wisest part of the attempt which Job's friends made to comfort him, when "they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great".

Lest, however, we should be tempted, like Job's poor overwrought wife, out of the frailty of our nature to give utterance to bitter and foolish words, we must remind ourselves that even in these cases, where the mystery of triumphant wrong or innocent suffering seems utterly inexplicable, it is far too soon for us to pronounce final judgment. There is always a double future to be faced, alike for the individual and for the race. However dramatic the representation of the close of Job's ordeal may be, when we are told that "the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning," it points vividly to the undeniable truth that, in myriads of cases, calamity which at the time it seemed as if God ought for sheer pity's sake to have averted, has become the starting-point of a greatly needed redemption. The accompanying suffering has issued in a new life, with a nobler character, whose influence for good has been measureless. Untold numbers of men and women have come to trace their real ennoblement back to a painful fall. No mystery of unprevented wrong or unrewarded right simply begins

and ends with its occurrence. Wise parents do many things to their children which to the dawning intelligence must seem to be the very opposite of love, but no explanation is then possible. Only later years can show that it was real love which administered bitter medicine, refused too many sweets, took away dangerous toys, imposed difficult tasks, and actually sent away from home joys and comforts to the plain fare and hard discipline of a boarding school. So, on the larger scale of ordinary human life, myriads of men have lived to echo Charles Kingsley's words of sympathy to his friend concerning his own "early Gethsemane". "I have already been through that ordeal which seems to threaten you, and my experience may be valuable to you. God knows how valuable it was to me, and that I rank that period of misery as the most priceless passage of my whole existence."

Even in those tragedies where death, violent or premature, puts an end to all things human, Christian philosophy does not permit us to lose all hope, or falter in the assurance that—

> The love of God is broader
> Than the measures of man's mind;
> And the heart of the Eternal
> Is most wonderfully kind.

The passing together into the unseen, of the murderer and his victim, the sweet young life to which our hearts so desperately cling, with some hoary villain whom we cannot but be glad to miss, does not mean that they are all simply lost in oblivion, or indiscriminately engulfed in a moral chaos.

> "God changes never. In that unseen realm of life He is for ever the same as here, or rather, to express the eternal truth more worthily, in this little world He is the same that He for ever is

> in the infinite realms of being—the lover of souls and the enemy of sin. We are not able to trace out our hopes to their fulfilment, or our fears to their extinction, but as Christians we are entitled to leave the problem of evil in the hands of God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, trusting Him that wherever sin has abounded, grace will much more abound." [1]

As to the myriads—for such they are—to whom the old pathetic saying applies, "Whom the gods love die young," whether the half-hidden pagan suggestion that the "love" consists in what they here escape, be more or less true, the Christian assurance is that they do but pass from a chilly dawn to a brighter noon, that the loss is ours not theirs. When our oft crude and childish notions of heaven are dismissed to their deserved oblivion, there remains a prospect of life so much more rich and full than this, as to warrant entirely the optimism of the Apostle when, out of the midst of sufferings which God did not intervene to prevent or lessen, he wrote to his fellow-sufferers and fellow-candidates for martyrdom: "I am utterly convinced that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in our case". With such an assurance, resting as it does upon Christ's own yet deeper, tenderer, all-comprehensive words, we must, as well we may, be content, until, in the light that never was on sea or land, we see no longer "in a mirror and are puzzled," but face to face.

Even now, when on the broadest scale, dismissing alike the far far future and our nearest circles of relationship, we think of mankind at large and the present conflict 'twixt good and ill which seems so

[1] Dr. W. N. Clarke, "Christian Doctrine of God," p. 462.

tragic, there is no ground whatever for fear that Armageddon may issue in Pandemonium. Rather is there every reason for endorsing a conditional optimism. All the woes and wrongs of our modern civilization cannot suppress the conviction that humanity is evolving upwards and working out the beast. The suggestion of evolution is, indeed, vast and complex, in the moral even more than in the physical realm. To appreciate it is to appreciate a landscape rather than a blade of grass. We must learn not only to take large views, but to be patient in so doing. The results most to be desired cannot possibly come in a day. If, as our men of science tell us, it took a hundred millions of years, or more, to prepare this terrestrial ball for human residence, what are a few thousand years as the school-time of the wondrous yet perverse creature who finally emerged from the preceding animalhood, into a moral liberty which omnipotence itself cannot compel to take the upward way?

This at least on the smaller scale we know, that no one short and easy lesson, learned at school, will ever make a lad a scholar, or a gentleman. Such a result can only be brought to pass through the sum total of all the pains that all his lessons, then—and their after-continuance—have ever cost him; and the teacher who determined to save his pupils from all such pains, would be their greatest enemy. Rather, because he respects and loves them, he does not intervene to mitigate their tasks, or prevent their punishments, or rid them of conflict, for in the conflicts and the difficulties and the discipline is disguised their greatest benediction. So on the world scale, that the divine method of non-intervention is neither a failure nor evidence that God has forgotten humanity, may surely be proved even now by appeal to fact. For whatever be the future's

promise of better things, already, beyond all controversy, the mystery of good, in the moral no less than in the non-moral realm, is immeasurably greater than the mystery of evil. To this every civilized country bears abundant witness, and the rapidity with which the whole world is becoming cosmopolitan promises an end ere long to all the bygone miseries of savagery. All bright estimates of the future are, of course, definitely conditional. The certainty is that the better day, when sin, and shame, and war, and strife, and cruelty, and poverty will cease, will not be brought to pass by a providence of special interventions, but by that co-operation of man with God wherein natural law is recognized as His voice, and obeyed as the assurance of His loving kindness. The exhortation of an Apostle to the Philippians of old comes thus to bear an ever-widening significance, nor can all the science and philosophy of to-day combine to utter a word of greater wisdom or more actual comfort—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is working in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure".

When all has been thought and said upon the complex problems here considered, the final note must be one of tender sympathy no less than of patient hope. There are so many cases in which the great world-conflict is lost in the distance, blotted out of vision by some keen personal sorrow, or bereavement, or disappointment, or suffering, or calamity, which becomes greatest of all through being nearest. "Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died"—is a typical outcry from many a baffled mind and troubled heart. "My brother," in such a case, becomes more than all humanity. Argue as we may, we cannot stifle the soul's pathetic murmuring—"If God were a loving Father, would

He have allowed that enemy to do me this uncalled-for injury?—that friend whom I loved and trusted to the uttermost, to turn upon me with cruel treachery? Why did He not rebuke the pitiless fever in which our darling was burnt to death? Why not prevent the miserable accident that robbed a whole family of its breadwinner and broke a true and tender woman's heart? Oh! who will answer for us these wails that never cease? And echo answers, who? Well may modern agnosticism ask, by the mouth of an able representative—"Is there no consolation in religion or philosophy to support us in the day of trial and in the hour of death?" But the reply is as hopeless as honest—"Alas, if we take away the promises of Christianity, *there is none at all*".[1] Philip's pathetic plea has gathered unmeasured intensity through the intervening ages. "Lord, show us the Father and it suffices us." To that there is one, though only one valid reply. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." To the doctrine and example of Jesus the human mind and heart are driven back, when all other solace fails. And worthily so, for never on earth has there been such a personality, never such a doctrine, never such a tragedy, never such a triumph, as His.

The quibble to-day about the historicity of Jesus, is childish, in face of facts. It does not merit the serious and crushing replies which it has called forth. The only question that really calls for answer is as to the significance of Jesus for a perplexed and sorrowing humanity. Amid the glare of the modern knowledge to which nothing is sacred, with all the burden of our world-cares upon us, and with our secret heart-sorrows gnawing within, we yet have

[1] Mrs. F. Petersen, "Hibbert Journal," April, 1908. Italics hers.

His assurance concerning the Fatherhood—"If it were not so I would have told you"—and His example. They are blessed for whom His words suffice. But for all others this at least is true, that if there were ever a case in which the human mind and heart unite to affirm that God ought to have intervened, to prevent the world's worst murder, it was at Calvary. Yet from out that darkness there issued humanity's bitterest cry—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And to that cry there came no answering miracle of deliverance. The soldier executioners were not smitten with paralysis; the reviling scribes and Pharisees were not stricken dumb. God did not intervene. If He had done, what would have been the condition of the world to-day? We cannot tell. But this we know, from the lips of noble unbelief as emphatically as from the hearts of believers, that that non-intervention has been the world's greatest benediction. No failure of the Christian Church, from the beginning until now, can alter the fact that the cross of Jesus Christ has been and still is the mightiest influence for the highest good amongst the most potent nations on earth. His ideal and His example abide, whatever becomes of shibboleths and organizations. To Him, after the bitter pain freely borne for love's sake, there came the peace that passes understanding —"Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit". And from such peace He passed on to the triumph of that actual resurrection which is, after all the hopes and fears of the ages and all the anxious probings and peerings of present-day science, our surest guarantee and worthiest pledge that death is but the gate of life.

We have all to face life as we find it. At any moment there may break upon any of us an avalanche of unexpected tragedy. At some moment, whether

late or soon, there must come the hour when the strongest will bow in helplessness at the call of death. Christianity holds out no promise of miraculous deliverance from either. The Gospel does not bid us expect that God will intervene. "It is enough for the servant that he be as his Lord." To the most sincere and devoted disciple there may come the time when all other hope and comfort are gone, and only Christ is left. But—"ONLY"? Was it not one who had manfully endured all the mystery of non-prevented suffering, and faced without flinching the certainty of martyrdom, with neither hope nor prayer for divine intervention, who deliberately declared that "in all these things—tribulation, anguish, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword—we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us". It was no mere gush of pious exaltation. It was a true word, whose truth remains and will remain until earth's last tragedy is over, and all the shadows of our present life are lost in the light of the Eternal Love.

DOES THE MYSTERY OF PAIN DISPROVE THE LOVE OF GOD?

"The notions of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest have been too commonly taken to mean that life in the animal world is one tragic series of ruthless single combats; that every man's hand was and ever must be against the hand of every man, and every beast's tooth and claw against the tooth and claw of every beast. But if we read Darwin's 'Descent of Man' and Prince Kropotkin's 'Mutual Aid among Animals' and Winwood Reade's 'Martyrdom of Man'—and Wallace's 'Darwinism' and 'World of Life'—we shall find that the law of natural selection does not favour any such horrible conclusion."

—Mr. R. BLATCHFORD, "Not Guilty," p. 41.

"The ideal of evolution is thus no gladiator's show, but an Eden; and though competition can never be wholly eliminated—the line of progress is no straight line but at most an asymptote—it is much for our pure natural history to see no longer struggle but love, as creation's final law."

—"Evolution," by Profs. J. A. THOMSON and P. GEDDES.

"Our whole tendency to transfer our sensations of pain to all other animals is grossly misleading. The probability is that there is as great a gap between man and the lower animals in sensitiveness to pain, as there is in their intellectual and moral faculties. The widespread idea of the cruelty of nature is almost wholly imaginary. It rests on the false assumption that the sensations of the lower animals are necessarily equal to our own, and takes no account whatever of these fundamental principles of evolution which almost all the critics profess to accept. Hence the ludicrously exaggerated view adopted by men of eminence and usually of such calm judgment, like Huxley—a view almost as far removed from fact or science as the purely imaginary and humanitarian dogma of the poet—

'The poor beetle that we tread upon,
In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great
As when a giant dies'.

Whatever the giant may feel, if the theory of evolution is true, the 'poor beetle' certainly feels an almost irreducible minimum of pain—probably none at all."

—Dr. A. R. WALLACE, "The World of Life".

"The pleasures of each generation evaporate in air; it is their pains that increase the spiritual momentum of the world."

—Dr. ILLINGWORTH, in "Lux Mundi".

"The doubts of many as to the origin of pain are not unreasonable, but a full consideration of the whole subject will show clearly that the gain far outweighs the loss. On the sensitiveness of animals to pain, depends their very existence. To drown a pain, to obtund the parts so that no pain is felt, is to throw away the warning which the pain has given."

—"The Lancet."

"I cannot tell you what is the meaning of a scheme far beyond human comprehension. But I know it is safe to trust in my sweetheart Nature, and feel certain she will never mislead those who do."

—Mr. M. BLATCHFORD in the "Clarion".

CHAPTER II

DOES THE MYSTERY OF PAIN DISPROVE THE LOVE OF GOD?

Of all objections brought against Christian faith, those which are based upon the mystery of pain have ever been the most popular and most effective. Nothing is so easy as to conjure up instances of tragedy from history, from nature, from personal observation. Nothing is so potent as an appeal to the feelings by means of the imagination. It is the first outcry of the tyro in his anti-Christian declamation. It is the last sigh of the man of science or of letters, who pathetically declares that he would believe if he could. It is, almost everywhere, an ever-troubling perplexity to thoughtful believers. "I am only one"—says an eminent and genial Professor of Biblical exegesis in a Christian College—"out of many, for whom the problem of pain constitutes the most powerful objection to a theism adequate to our deepest needs. This is of all problems the most baffling to many who wish to accept a theistic view of the universe. Even sin and death are mysteries less oppressive and impenetrable. If sin is a darker evil, pain is the more obscure."[1] Nothing would be easier than to fill whole pages with lurid extracts from the writings of unbelievers, who have vied with each other in heaping denunciations upon the

[1] Prof. A. S. Peake, M.A., D.D., "The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament," p. 137.

Christian doctrine of Providence and a Heavenly Father. [1]

Most of these, we may readily own, are sincere, and they are so far true as to find only too real an echo in many a Christian heart; whilst they must generally be accepted as, at least, pointers to a problem of the utmost gravity. As such they may be welcomed; for a fool's paradise is assuredly no part of the Christian ideal. The way of blind-eyed, shallow-hearted, sentimental optimism, is for ever barred to the genuine believer. Rather is he bidden to "prove all things," and only "hold fast that which is good," with "whatsoever things are true". Whilst, therefore, we do not hesitate to acknowledge the seriousness of the difficulty suggested, and make here no pretence of finally disposing of it, we may yet show cause for protest against the sweeping assumptions and wholesale assertions of not a few anti-Christian writers and orators. They have no monopoly of truth, any more than of sensitiveness or sincerity. The question of this section which they so oracularly answer in the affirmative, we venture, with equal candour and vigour, to answer in the negative. Whether the Christian believer can solve all the harrowing perplexities which attach

[1] Perhaps one may suffice for many. Says Richard Jefferies, "How can I adequately express my contempt for the assertion that all things occur for the best, for a wise and beneficent end? It is the most utter falsehood and a crime against the human race. Human suffering is so great, so endless, so awful, that I can hardly write of it. The whole and the worst the worst pessimist can say, is far beneath the least particle of the truth, so immense is the misery of man."

Whilst as to the animal world even Huxley—usually a calm and judicial observer—on one occasion so far allowed his unscientific imagination to run away with him as to write, "Since thousands of times a minute, were our ears only sharp enough, we should hear the sighs and groans of pain like those heard by Dante at the gate of hell, the world cannot be governed by what we call benevolence".

to individual cases or not, he is warranted by facts in his affirmation that the mystery of pain does not contradict, let alone disprove, the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

In brief preliminary summary it is well to point out that good and thoughtful men of all religions, and in all ages, have felt the seriousness of the questions involved. Nothing can really be added by modern expletives, to the simple-minded but deep-hearted expressions in which the ancient Psalmists clothed their bewilderment at the prosperity of the wicked and the calamities of the righteous. Nor can the exaggerated plaints of a Jefferies and a Huxley combined, do more justice to life's tragic side than the tender yet dignified acknowledgment of the Apostle Paul, "We know that the whole of creation is groaning together as in the pains of childbirth until this hour". Christian theism feels the painfulness of pain, and sees the seeming contradiction to universal benevolence in the scheme of things, quite as honestly and tenderly as the most cynical agnosticism or raucous secularism.

Moreover, Christian thinkers have ever faced the problems alleged with quite as much knowledge and candour as any anti-Christian propaganda can show. Their acquaintance with facts and employment of principles have been quite as scientific and philosophical as unbelief has ever displayed. Nor is it enough to say that their conclusions have been definitely more encouraging in the present, and hopeful for the future. It is rather, in plain truth, a question of all or none. Whatever may yet be the demands upon our faith and patience, in face of the dark problems of our present existence, if the Christian solution be shown to be untrustworthy, there is no other. Nothing in that case is left us but old Omar Khayyam's pessimism :—

Into this Universe, and *why* not knowing,
Nor *whence*, like Water willy-nilly flowing ;
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not *whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

What, without asking, hither hurried *whence ?*
And, without asking, *whither* hurried hence !
Another and another Cup to drown
The Memory of this impertinence !

Orphans of nothing, sports of chance, puppets of necessity, marionettes of circumstance, coming no whence and going no whither, yet possessed as inalienably as uselessly of faculties which cannot but cause us to feel, and ceaselessly demand to know—such we must deem ourselves to be, if the Christian hope is denied us. Of man in that case it must be for ever true that he is—

A monster, then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime
That tear each other in their slime,
Were mellow music matched with him.

In face of such an alternative, the human heart may well demand sufficient reason before consenting, at the behest of unbelief, to jettison its present comfort and future hope.

The supreme doctrine of Christianity is undoubtedly the love of the Divine Fatherhood. With that love, real, impartial, universal, eternal, the Christian religion stands or falls. It does not profess to be a deduction from nature, but a revelation in Jesus Christ. Much confusion sometimes arises and much energy, both of attack and of defence, is wasted, from the ignoring or forgetting of this plain principle. We shall presently see that nature is not the mere charnel house, or bloody shambles, that anti-Christian sensationalists are so fond of denouncing. We must indeed, if we are to be true to realities, make no less strong affirmation to the contrary.

How far in the light of competent modern knowledge we ought to go, may surely be stated with fairness in the language of a well-known and highly esteemed surgeon, not long passed away, who combined with ample scientific knowledge and vast acquaintance with human suffering, what he himself termed "emancipation from all Christian creeds," and so, for twenty years, pursued an unbiassed quest in the history and conditions of human development. The unequivocal testimony, then, of the late Sir Henry Thompson, which at the end of his prolonged research he found himself compelled to utter, is this :—

> "I was now assured by evidence which I could not resist, that all which man with his limited knowledge and experience has learned to regard as due to Supreme Power and Wisdom, although immeasurably beyond his comprehension, is also associated with the exercise of an absolutely beneficent influence over all living things, of every grade, which exist within its range.
>
> "And the result of my labour has at least brought me its own reward, by conferring emancipation from the fetters of all the creeds, and unshakable confidence in the Power, the Wisdom and the Beneficence which pervade and rule the Universe." [1]

Such a testimony, from such a source, is in itself sufficient answer to most of the diatribes against nature which are so sensationally paraded by unbelief. It covers all the ground of Mr. J. S. Mill's famous indictment, in his autobiography and his "Essays on Religion"; whilst it comes from an observer whose whole life-work entitled him to speak

[1] "The Unknown God," p. 85.

on such matters with much more authority. It may, therefore, avail to set us free from the glamour of popular appeals under this head.

But it does not amount to as much as the Psalmist's conviction—"The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works"—"Like as a Father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him". Still less does it convey the assurance of the actuality of the divine Fatherhood, concerning which Jesus speaks so unequivocally,—"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows." Such words are a true summary of His whole doctrine, and the figurative phrases in which it is conveyed only emphasize the unmistakableness of his assurance.

The question of questions thus becomes—Can we accept finally such an assurance from Him as everlastingly true? Or is it hopelessly contradicted before our eyes, in that realm of daily fact from which no one of us can escape? Atheism, secularism, pessimism, agnosticism, and all other anti-Christian cults, combine to affirm the latter. Their main thesis is that nature, including human history on evolutionary lines, does so utterly and hopelessly contradict Christ that we can no longer believe Him. Their conclusion is that—"There is no Heavenly Father watching tenderly over us His children. He is but the baseless shadow of a wistful human dream."[1] Modern agnosticism sometimes tries to halt between two opinions, but practically endorses this verdict whilst professing to keep an open mind. Christian theism, however, does not hesitate to reject their

[1] R. Blatchford, "God and My Neighbour," p. 79.

melancholy conclusions. All unashamed in spite of, or rather by reason of, our utmost modern knowledge, it affirms that nature, fairly interpreted, not only does not contradict Christ, but actually encourages us to trust His teaching where it can itself no longer speak definitely. After listening patiently to the sweeping denunciations and bitter invectives which characterize most of the utterances of unbelief in this regard, theism deliberately formulates a fourfold reply. It objects to these objections that, taken as a whole, (1) They are grossly indiscriminate, and thus guilty of misleading exaggeration; (2) that they most unfairly ignore important and decisive modifications; (3) that they exhibit inexcusable one-sidedness; (4) that they give no fair heed to the valid grounds for Christian faith. Full consideration of any one of these would require a volume. Such a summary, however, as must here suffice, may have suggestive, even if not conclusive value.

1. The indiscriminateness which leads to gross exaggeration is twofold. The moral element in the whole case is confused with the non-moral, and the animal is identified with the human. The result is a misrepresentation as unwarranted in the one case as untrue to fact in the other.

Of the inexcusable confusion between non-moral pain and moral evil, we will take two brief specimens, one popular, the other academic. The author of "God and My Neighbour," writes, that "If God were a God of love, He would not choose to create a world in which hate and pain should have a place. Why does He permit evil and pain to continue?" This thoughtless simplicity, by which "hate" and "evil" are classified as of the same order with "pain," may do very well for cheap journalism, but is altogether unworthy of any serious teacher. To the same effect, however, Prof. Haeckel writes:—

> "We read daily in our journals of accidents and crimes of all kinds which cause the unexpected death of happy human beings. Every year we read with horror the statistics of the thousands of deaths from shipwreck and railway accidents, earthquakes and landslips, wars and epidemics. And then we are asked to believe in a loving Providence that has decreed the death of these poor mortals. Simple children and dull believers may soothe themselves with such phrases. They no longer impose on educated people in the twentieth century, who prefer a full and fearless knowledge of the truth." [1]

Such sentiments are an almost invariable concomitant of anti-Christian writing. But the philosophy is as poor as the tone is contemptuous. "Accidents and crimes," "wars and epidemics," are roughly flung together as if of the same significance; when even a child can see that under no circumstances whatever can an "accident" be a "crime," and that "wars" are due to an altogether different cause from "epidemics". The object of such recklessness on Prof. Haeckel's part is plainly to work in the word "decreed," which is at once a false and question-begging term. The Christian doctrine of Providence does not for a moment concede that God has

[1] "The Wonders of Life," p. 46. One of the pitiful features of modern unbelief is its apparent inability to keep from sneering at those who differ from it. Thus, on another occasion, the same Professor says, "The beautiful dream of God's goodness and wisdom in nature, to which we listened as children so devoutly fifty years ago, no longer finds credit now—at least amongst educated people who think" ("Confession of Faith," p. 74). One would have thought that Sir Henry Thompson, not to mention the host of other believers, was quite as well "educated" as Professor Haeckel. But such contemptuous bitterness is by no means confined to this writer.

"decreed the deaths" of the victims of crime and war. These are moral actions for which the doers of them are responsible. Even if it were true that all non-moral suffering came from such a decree, it ought in the name of intellectual honesty to be always kept entirely distinct from the suffering and misery which are due directly to human wrong-doing. As intimated in the preceding section, such honestly thoughtful discrimination would relieve Providence of the responsibility for some seven-tenths of all human woe. Such a significant conclusion may conflict with the intention of these anti-Christian indictments, but it is nevertheless true, and ought therefore to be recognized.

2. Another source of confusion, quite as common and misleading in its exaggerated misrepresentation, is the way in which the suffering of the animal world in general is put on a level with human suffering, estimated in human terms, and measured according to human sensitiveness. Waiving for a moment the general though unpardonable one-sidedness of the usual tirade against nature, the point to be here observed is that by far the greater part of the sensational pictures drawn to discredit the Christian doctrine of a Heavenly Father on the ground of animal suffering, is pure bathos with no scientific warrant whatever. The paragraph from "God and My Neighbour" given below,[1] is a fair specimen. It

[1] "Nature is red in beak and claw. On land and in sea, the animal creation chase and maim and slay and devour each other. The beautiful swallow on the wing devours the equally beautiful gnat. The ichneumon fly lays its eggs under the skin of the caterpillar. The eggs are hatched by the warmth of the caterpillar's blood. They produce a brood of larvæ which devour the caterpillar alive. A pretty child dances on the village green. Her feet crush creeping things; there is a busy ant or a blazoned beetle with its back broken, writhing in the dust unseen. A germ flies from a stagnant pool and the laughing child, its mother's darling, dies dreadfully of diphtheria.

is taken from a chapter of five pages, in which the writer settles the whole age-long difficulty to his own complete satisfaction. But apart from the absurd entomology which credits the ant and beetle with a back that can be broken, the whole suggestion is as false as sensationalism can make it. Human sensitiveness, in a word, is recklessly attributed to creatures which are no more capable of it than this writer is of the experience of a Mahatma. All such terms as "terror," "devour alive," "writhing," etc., have no real application whatever to the creatures in question. One might with much more reason attribute the nervous tremors of a delicate English lady to a North American Indian, or a "nerveless Chinee".[1]

A volcano bursts suddenly into eruption and a beautiful city is a heap of ruins, and its inhabitants are charred or mangled corpses. And the Heavenly Father who is love, has power to save, and makes no sign. Is it not so?"

This writer's own answer to his own question is given at the commencement of this section. It may also be interesting to note his brother's reply in the columns of the same "Clarion". "What does this charge of cruelty amount to? Simply that everything lives upon something else. Beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles, insects, even man himself. In short, we live upon life, which is the only thing nature has to offer us. These natural modes of gaining a living do not shock me, or dismay me, or put me out of conceit with my divinity. I only know that Nature is overwhelming in her power and transcendently beautiful; and that she is the source of all life, and health and joy. No; I cannot tell you what is the meaning of a scheme far beyond human apprehension. But I know it is safe to trust in my sweetheart Nature, and feel certain she will never mislead those who do."

[1] Dr. A. R. Wallace mentions the case of some Australian tribes where the man who is found guilty of a crime "appears before the chief of the tribe, holds out his leg, and one after another the members of the offended family walk up, each sticks in his spear, draws it out, and retires. When all have done so, the leg is a mass of torn flesh and skin and blood, but the sufferer has stood still without shrinking during the whole operation. He is very soon as well as ever, except for a badly scarred leg" ("The World of Life," p. 379). Chinese callousness to suffering also is proverbial.

With much more truth than popular arraignments of nature exhibit, the thoughtful author of "Evil and Evolution," points out "how difficult it is to say what are really criteria in the matter of the sufferings of animals".

> "The convulsive struggles that animals make cannot be regarded as any criterion of the pain they are suffering, nor does the mere existence of nerves appear to be altogether reliable. The sting of a wasp is to a human being one of the keenest sensations. But a badger, which is an animal tolerably well endowed with nerves, will dig out a nest of wasps and eat as many of them as he can catch, quite indifferent to their stings. Frogs and toads will also swallow wasps whenever they get the chance."[1]

In regard, however, to the generally prevalent notion that the animal world is—to quote Schopenhauer's phrase—"a cockpit of tortured and suffering beings," two observers of nature, at all events, ought to weigh with modern men, viz. Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace. If these authorities are not competent to judge, we may truly say that no one is. Prof. Haeckel's phrase runs, "The raging war of interests in human society is only a feeble picture of the unceasing and terrible war of existence which reigns throughout the whole of the living world". But what does Darwin say of this "unceasing and terrible war"? At the close of his chapter on the "struggle for existence," he thus writes:—

> "When we reflect on this struggle, we may console ourselves with the full belief that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is

[1] p. 130.

felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy, survive and multiply."

To the same subject, in his book on "Darwinism," Dr. Wallace refers thus :—

> "We have a horror of all violent and sudden death, because we think of the life full of promise cut short, of hopes and expectations unfulfilled, and of the grief of mourning relatives. But all this is quite out of place in the case of animals, for whom a violent and sudden death is in every way the best. Thus the poet's picture of—
>
> 'Nature red in tooth and claw
> With ravine'
>
> is a picture the evil of which is read into it by our imaginations, the reality being made up of full and happy lives, usually terminated by the quickest and least painful of deaths."

Referring more especially to Prof. Huxley's sensational indictment, Dr. Wallace says :—

> "There is good reason to believe that all this is greatly exaggerated, that the supposed torments and miseries of animals have little real existence, but are the reflection of the imagined sensations of cultivated men and women in similar circumstances, and that the amount of actual suffering caused by the struggle for existence amongst animals, is altogether insignificant." [1]

[1] "Darwinism," pp. 37, 40. As these estimates were written twenty years ago, it may be of interest to note the same eminent authority's opinion in his latest work "The World of Life" :—

"In this category of painless or almost painless animals, I think we may place almost all aquatic animals up to fishes, all the vast hordes of insects, probably all mollusca and worms, thus reducing the sphere of pain to a minimum throughout all the earlier geological

The well-known naturalist, Mr. E. Kay Robinson, in his remarkable book "The Religion of Nature" started his special investigation thus:—

> "For more than a score of years the problem of the apparent cruelty of the world was daily on my mind. Nature in almost all its details seemed to undermine the very basis of religion; —the seeming atrocities which are common-places in nature are often almost too horrid to be described in print". . . "but gradually I came to see the very truth, and now I find nature to be the bed-rock of true religion."

His deliberate, reasoned, fact-supported conclusion is that "There is no cruelty or suffering in nature, except where it exists in the thoughts of men". Whether such a conclusion appears to be credible to ordinary observers or not, there is overwhelming evidence to warrant Dr. Wallace's judgement that:—

> "On the whole, then, we conclude that the popular idea of the struggle for existence entail-

ages, and very largely even now. We may be sure that all the earlier forms of life possessed the minimum of sensation required for the purposes of their short existence, and that anything approaching to what we term 'pain,' was unknown to them" (p. 375).

As to the elaborate contrivances for shedding blood or causing pain that are seen throughout nature, the vicious-looking teeth and claws of the cat tribe, etc., etc., on which such stress is often laid: "The idea that all these weapons exist for the purpose of shedding blood, or giving pain, is wholly illusory. As a matter of fact their effect is wholly beneficial, even to the sufferers, inasmuch as they tend to the diminution of pain" (p. 377).

Referring to the degree to which civilized man is increasingly exposed to perils of which animals know nothing, he adds: "Against this vast ever-present network of dangers, together with the ever-present danger of consuming fire, man is warned and protected by an ever-increasing sensibility to pain, a horror at the very sight of wounds and blood; and it is this specially developed sensibility that we most illogically transfer to the animal world, in our wholly exaggerated and often quite mistaken views as to the cruelty of nature" (p. 379).

> ing misery and pain on the animal world, is the very reverse of the truth. What it really brings about is the maximum of life, and of the enjoyment of life with the minimum of suffering and pain."

With such testimony, from such sources, we are warranted in dismissing almost the whole of the usual laboured indictment of nature on the ground of cruelty in the animal world, from further consideration. It does not justify the anti-Christian use made of it. It does not contradict the love of a God whose "tender mercies are over all His works".

(3) It was noted above that the opposition to Christian faith under this head is quite unfair, in ignoring very important modifications of the indictment, which ought to be taken into full account. These are, the manifest mortal and moral elements in human nature. We may freely acknowledge that the mystery of pain only really or seriously begins when, leaving the animal world, we address our attention to the human realm. But we are certainly entitled to demand a fair definition of what the human actually connotes. Are physical immortality, and non-morality, necessary constituents of human nature? Surely the true reply is—Certainly not. But both of these lie as latent assumptions in the usual denials of the love of God on the ground of human suffering.

(i) As to the first: "Killing," says Mr. J. S. Mill, "the most criminal act recognized by human laws, Nature does once to every human being that lives". From which the inference, apparently intended, is that nature is criminal because men die. It is a strangely false position, for an avowed logician. For, as Mr. Wallace points out, "Without death and reproduction, there could have been no progressive development of the organic world". There must be

some perversity in objecting to a method of nature to which we owe our very existence.[1] With the old theology which attributed human mortality to the literal historic accuracy of the opening chapters of Genesis, we are no longer concerned. In the fact endorsed by science and history as well as observation, that by their very constitution "it is appointed unto men once to die," there is no ground whatever for calling in question the love of a Heavenly Father for his human children.

(ii) Attention has already been called to the indiscriminateness of the unbelief which confuses the moral with the non-moral in its reckless allegations against Divine Providence. But the emphasis of repetition is here necessary, in order to clear away once and for all the greatest misrepresentation of the whole case.

Prof. Haeckel asks, in his usual style :—

> "How can this all-loving God answer for the immeasurable sum of want and misery and pain and unhappiness which He sees accumulated before Him every year, in the lives and families of States, cities, and hospitals?"

But there is no more real reason why God should

[1] Prof. Peake has well stated the case thus. "Still less can death be called an evil. This is obviously true as it affects the race. No death would soon mean no birth. Those in possession would prevent new comers from trenching on their domain. Thus life with its blessings would be confined to the few, instead of being distributed to many swiftly succeeding generations. In such a world progress would be inconceivably difficult, the dead weight of custom would crush all aspirations to reform. Even if fresh lives came into it, what could they do pitted against the tyranny of tradition backed by power and the timidity of experience? Far better that death should remove the men callous to abuse and hostile to reform, and that men of warmer impulses, higher ideals, more generous enthusiasm, should fill their place. And even for the individual, death is in itself no unhappy fate" ("Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament," p. 138).

"answer for" all this, than that Prof. Haeckel himself should answer for all the misery in his native city. There is no more unwarranted *petitio quæstionis* in all philosophy, than this wholesale assumption of Divine responsibility for everything, without discrimination. It is altogether useless to keep on repeating, as popular unbelief does,[1] that "If God is responsible for man's existence, God is responsible for man's acts". For it is a sheer contradiction in terms which only the wilfully blind can refuse to see. The creature who is not responsible, is not a man at all, but a machine—a thing. The only conceivable ground for Divine responsibility in his case would be that he does not act at all; any more than the pen acts with which these words are written. There is no need here to go farther into the "Free will" controversy.[2] Unbelief has no right whatever to assume that men are but marionettes. Yet this is what is continually done by so-called "Rationalism," in order to charge upon God the sum total of human woe. Thus a book issued for the "Rationalist Press Association," says to the general reader—

> "Whether your creed is, that of the most rigid Calvinist or the most generous optimist, in either case, and apart from all subsidiary questions of sin and salvation, you have back of the whole complication the one supreme independent omnipotent will, purposing and planning the whole thing, not only in its vast outlines, but in all the minutiæ of its detail—conceiving and arranging every enormity, every abortion, every pain, every weird and wicked thing, as

[1] In Mr. Blatchford's "God and My Neighbour," it is printed in italics four times in as many pages.

[2] The whole matter is fully faced in modern light, in my volume "Determinism—False and True" (C. Kelly).

surely as every beauty, every glory, every gladness, inspiration, or perfection."

No falser statement could be perpetrated in print. The mischief is that it falls, with others of its kind, into the hands of the young and uneducated, and serves the purpose of making the mystery of pain to be so black in its enormity as to crush out, if possible, all Christian belief. But any one who writes about the "subsidiary question of sin," in dealing with the human mystery of pain, only shows that he has prejudged and misjudged the whole question from the beginning, by an unwarrantable assumption. How unwarrantable, apart from philosophic argument, is manifest from the fact that there is no single place, or condition, in civilized or indeed human society, where this "deterministic" irresponsibility on the part of men and women is, or can be, practised.

Dr. F. R. Tennant has put more truth in this regard into one sentence, than is found in whole libraries of Determinism.[1] "Responsibility for the possibility of moral evil, and for the opportunities for its realization, lies with God; responsibility for the actuality of moral evil lies with man."[2] Christian philosophy does not desire in the least to shrink from the suggestion of the true Divine responsibility here outlined. But it protests with all possible earnestness, against the falsity of the wholesale charges brought against Divine Providence, by means of dragging down human nature to the level of the brute, or even lower, and enunciating the dogma of moral irresponsibility. A few more words from Dr. Tennant should suffice to decide the matter for all who have an open mind :—

[1] For the justification of this term, I must refer the reader to the volume on the subject, specified above.

[2] "The Origin and Propagation of Sin," p. 122.

> "Had evolution stopped short at the stage of lower animal life, and not proceeded until human experience appeared, there would have been indeed no sin; but there would also have been no possibility of moral good; no room for a revelation of the love and holiness of God. And unless we are prepared to maintain that the non-existence of persons, a world of mere things or of conscious automatons, is the highest ideal of a universe which man can conceive, we have no right to deny that the present world, with all its sin and misery, is compatible with the love of a righteous God. If the notion of a moral being incapable of evil be a contradiction which even omnipotence cannot realize, then the establishment of the possibility of sin, so far from being inconsistent with the love and holiness of God, is unquestionably its most adequate and indispensable expression."[1]

It follows that the only way in which the customary sweeping indictments of the love of God in human affairs can be justified, is by the degradation of man. But as, even according to Mr. J. S. Mill's declaration, "it is better to be a man dissatisfied than a pig satisfied," so the self-respect of ordinary humanity will agree that it is better to be a man in pain, than a brute in peace. There is something for men and women, after all, better, higher, nobler, than mere painlessness,[2] and that is moral character.

But the possibility of moral character which crowns man with glory and honour, at the same

[1] op. cit. p. 139.

[2] Mr. J. H. Peile, in his most valuable Bampton Lectures for 1907, has truly said hereupon, "The belief that pain is the one real evil infects much of our social and philanthropic effort to-day, and is a chief obstacle to the acceptance of real Christianity—but short of Christianity, reason and experience teach us better things" (p. 64).

time relieves God of responsibility for by far the greater part of human woe. It is immeasurably more against His will than against ours. Human capacity and responsibility necessarily go hand in hand. But for that capacity, in the words of a pronounced evolutionist—

> "We should have been the denizens of a world of puppets, where neither morality nor religion could have found place or meaning. The mystery of evil remains indeed a mystery still, but it is no longer a harsh dissonance such as greeted the poet's ears when the doors of hell were thrown open; for we see that this mystery belongs among the profound harmonies of God's creation."[1]

4. When the moral element is eliminated from the usual objections to the Fatherly goodness of God, we may classify the remaining human suffering for which man is sometimes not responsible, under the three heads of premature death, disease, and calamity.

(i) The first of these confessedly constitutes a real problem of sorrow and perplexity for every thoughtful mind and every tender heart. We do not say, as virulently as Prof. Haeckel concerning the early death of Heinrich Hertz, that—

> "Like the premature death of Spinoza, Raphael, Schubert, and many other great men, it is one of those brutal facts of human history which are enough of themselves to destroy the untenable myth of a wise Providence and an all-loving Father in Heaven."

But if we shrink from the "brutal" confidence with which such a dogma of unbelief is enunciated, it

[1] Mr. J. Fiske, "Through Nature to God," p. 56.

must be owned that the removal of many of the best young lives, with the perpetuation of many of the worst, has always constituted a severe problem for faith, from the days of the Psalmist until now. The protest of Christian faith, however, remains valid, viz. that, to employ Haeckel's terminology, the "thanatism" which affirms that death ends all, is certainly not proven, and modern science gives it no more warrant than human instinct.[1] God, freedom, and immortality are inseparable. The Christian faith which here sometimes trusts in the dark to the love of a Heavenly Father, does so on the distinct understanding that this life is not the only realm of relationship to Him. In such a connexion "premature" loses it significance. It applies only to the present life. To us who are bereft, the loss may indeed be real beyond repair. But until the Christian promise of the future is proved to be impossible, there is no sufficient reason in such loss for denying the Divine love which, if real, is also eternal.

(ii) As to the prevalence of disease, whilst nothing is easier than to conjure up harrowing facts which cannot be denied, nothing also is falser than to write and speak as if there were no other side to it. We must all acknowledge that the painful mystery, in many individual cases of extreme suffering, is, to us, insoluble. The utter indiscriminateness, moreover, with which disease sometimes appears to be distributed, taking no account whatever of moral character or spiritual elevation, together with the apparently useless intensity of the suffering which accompanies some forms of disease, dumbfound us with dire perplexity. Yet this is just the case in which the anti-Christian mood which calls itself

[1] For further discussion I must be content to refer the reader to the chapter on "Immortality" in my "Haeckel's Monism False".

"Rationalism" should be most true to its avowed principles. It describes itself thus :—

> "Rationalism may be defined as the mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason, and aims at establishing a system of philosophy and ethics verifiable by experience, and independent of all arbitrary assumption or authority."

Such a definition will admirably suit Christian philosophy. In the present case, all that is asked is that the "Rationalistic" objector to Divine Providence should be true to his principles. But this is precisely what he is not. Instead of the supremacy of reason, we are bidden acknowledge the supremacy of emotion. Judgement "according to appearance," not just judgement, is the method adopted. Would it be any more just than wise in estimating the position of a business man, to make the most of all his debts, and take no heed at all of his assets? Yet that is exactly what unbelief does in the great, grave, and complicated matter before us. It can never see the wood for the trees. It demands that everything dark, painful, mysterious, shall be cast into the scale against the love of God, but will not heed any suggestion that mitigations, explanations, compensations, illuminations, should be cast into the other scale on behalf of Providential care. Such a method is really absurd to the point of immorality.

As matter of plain and undeniable fact, there is not only a real but an enormous "other side". Indeed, when all is fairly and fully set forth, in a detail which is impossible here, the relation of the dark side to the bright may in sober truthfulness be likened to that of the light and heat of the sun as compared with the darkness of its spots. Then "Rationalism" calls upon us to dwell intensely on

the latter, but studiously avoid noticing the former! Whether this be a rational proceeding, common sense, apart altogether from religion, may be left to judge. Many items in the case merit elaboration, but they can here only be suggested.

(i) Be the mystery of disease what it may, the greater portion of it is more or less directly traceable not to nature, but to man's interference with nature. Thus Sir E. Ray Lankester tells us, in his Romanes Lecture on "Nature and Man," that—

> "It is a remarkable thing that the adjustment of organisms to their surroundings is so severely complete in nature, apart from man, that diseases are unknown as constant and normal phenomena under those conditions. It seems to be a legitimate view that every disease to which animals, and probably plants also, are liable, excepting as a transient and very exceptional occurrence, is due to man's interference."[1]

And if we pass on to the consideration of the diseases which especially afflict humanity, and bethink ourselves of epidemics, as well as of the consumption, scrofula, syphilis, scarlet fever, diphtheria, etc., which may be regarded as chronic epidemics, we are told that if men chose—

> "By the unstinted application of known methods of investigation and consequent controlling action, all epidemic disease could be abolished within so short a period as fifty years. It is merely a question of the employment of the means at our command. . . .
>
> "This malady and the use of alcohol as a beverage, are together responsible for more than half the disease and early death of the mature population of Europe. . . . And now the complete

[1] p. 28.

> suppression of this dire enemy of humanity is as plain and certain a piece of work to be at once accomplished as is the building of an iron-clad. But it will not be done for many years, because of the ignorance and unbelief of those who alone can act for the community in such matters."[1]

It may be answered—why should there be such diseases at all to require stamping out? The reply must be another question with unmeasured significance—why should there be any drink, or lust, or greed, or dirt, or selfishness, to cause them? It is not enough to say that these are instances of man's interference with the order of nature. The supplementary truth is that this order of nature is the expression, as Sir Henry Thompson averred, of a Divine benevolence which is always working for the greatest happiness of the greatest number. The pain, therefore, which follows upon its violation, is but a protest and a warning which together emphasize the benevolence.

(ii) Another item persistently overlooked by the arraigners of Divine goodness, is writ large before our eyes whenever we choose to read it, in the limitation put to possibilities of pain through the physical uniformity of the species. Were we but the offspring of chance, or of almighty malignity, nothing would be more easily conceivable than a world full of beings so utterly unlike that no similarity of structure would obtain between millions. In that case, whilst the possibilities of disease would be unbounded, the opportunities of relieving or healing them by human skill would be annihilated. The laws of physiology are the necessary condition of all medical science, whilst therapeutics depend

[1] pp. 30, 31.

absolutely for their value upon the wondrous analogies between human bodies, which enable the skilled physician, through wide experience, to become the sufferer's friend in need.

(iii) But behind all such skill, whether medical or surgical, there is always something else without which neither would avail. This is the measureless Mystery of Good which it is almost sacrilege to dismiss in a couple of sentences. But two terms may serve as pointers to a boundless field.

What "phagocytosis" means scientifically, must be left to a technical lecture on that theme. But what it means practically was lucidly explained by Sir Frederick Treves—whose authority will hardly be questioned—a short time since, in an address to the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution. "He claimed," says the report,

> "that the popular view of disease as a calamity was altogether erroneous, for its phenomena or symptoms were marked by a purpose, and that purpose was beneficent. The processes of disease aimed not at the destruction of life but at the saving of it. If it were not for disease, in the popular sense, human life would soon be extinct. He who grumbled about a cold, was finding fault with the measures of relief to which he owed his life."

Again, what does the surgeon mean when he looks favourably upon a wound with the remark that it will probably heal by "first intention"? Only this, that the indescribably wondrous microcosm of the body is so constructed that—so long as a man has not poisoned it with alcohol, or nicotine, or aught of the kind—the moment any injury happens to it, that moment it begins to repair itself. Were it not for such prompt, ceaseless and effective self-repair, no reader of these pages would be alive at this hour.

(iv) Yet is there something still more remarkable, and as a mystery of good absolutely insoluble, which, because it is the most wonderful of all, receives from most men least attention of all. We hear, *ad nauseam*, of the mystery of pain, but how is it that scarcely any one makes mention of the mystery of painlessness? It is the more unfair, as well as amazing, because the former, whatever stress be laid upon it, is verily a trifle compared with the latter. Here is an indescribably complex organism, with some thirty trillions [*sic*] of anatomical elements all living and working together to constitute it. Health means the perfect balance of all these, in such fashion that they all support each other with an energetic solidarity elsewhere unparalleled. Disease means that some few out of this colossal host get out of hand—for there is an unmistakable unified government of the total organism—and so make the mischief we call disease. The accompanying pain is but the reminder, and generally speaking, the measure of the mischief. In a moment we will appreciate this. Here, mark the almost incredible fact that those who profess to adore the supremacy of reason, deem it reasonable to ignore, as nothing worthy of notice, the condition when thirty trillions of living items are so working together in painless harmony as to make human life a joy and power. But when a comparatively small fraction of them go wrong, that constitutes sufficient ground for indicting the Author of nature as lacking in benevolence! The unfairness of unbelief in this respect is only equalled by its credulity in others. Meanwhile, as a matter of positive fact, everywhere and always, in every respect, in every age, in every family no less than in every nation, and in the immeasurable majority of individual men and women, the mystery of good is as manifestly greater than the mystery of

ill, as the human body itself is than any one of its component parts. If, then, God is debited with the latter, assuredly He should also be credited with the former. Such fairness in reasoning may not answer all our questions, but it will suffice to silence the gibes of unbelief, and contribute something real and great towards good grounds for genuine belief.

5. The same principles apply to the human woes associated with natural phenomena such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, famines, accidents, epidemics. When the human or moral element is eliminated from these, however harrowing to sheer feeling certain known cases may be, calm judgement cannot rationally regard them as contradictions to the general reality of benevolence in nature. The main mitigations—which would bear careful elaboration—are such as these.

Earthquakes are terrible in themselves, but they are not the mere centres of Titanic malignity that they are often made out to be. There are very real modifications of such indictment. (*a*) All those who are thereby killed would have died naturally in the course of a few years. The mere fact, therefore, of their death, does not come into the account. (*b*) As to the manner of death, its painfulness is grossly exaggerated. Most of them would have suffered more in the ordinary way of human disease, than in the overwhelming eruption or convulsion. In numberless cases there is no suffering at all.[1] (*c*) None of the sufferers were compelled by Divine Providence to go and live in a district known to be

[1] Did space permit, hundreds of instances might be quoted showing that in accidents, just as in the case of seizure by wild animals, there is a natural and merciful process of nervous inhibition which acts as a perfect anæsthetic. In a little book entitled "Is Nature Cruel?" by J. C. Hirst (Jas. Clarke), many well-authenticated instances are cited which afford reliable answer to the lurid sensationalism usually expended on this theme.

liable to such occurrences. Yet even after an earthquake, as in Calabria, or Sicily, or San Francisco, no sooner is the convulsion past than fresh buildings are erected on the same spot, in defiance of all warnings as to what is there possible. (*d*) Even then, great part of the suffering is due to human selfishness and carelessness in building.[1] This certainly ought not to be charged to Divine Providence; any more than numberless "accidents" which have plainly happened through culpable human neglect. (*e*) The only ground on which such occurrences could legitimately come into an indictment of Divine goodness, would be that they formed part of a general scheme which was working for human ill. But this is exactly the opposite of the truth. They are all necessary parts of a scheme which is working for the greatest good of the greatest number. Science is perfectly clear upon that point.[2] (*f*) The demand that there should never be any such occurrence,

[1] The Japanese committee of experts sent to investigate the San Francisco earthquake, reported by Dr. Nakamura, Professor of Architecture at Tokio University, that "dishonest mortar—a corrupt agglomeration of sea-sand and lime—was responsible for nearly all of the earthquake damage in San Francisco".

[2] The testimony of Prof. Judd in his volume on "Volcanoes" ("International Scientific Series") ought to suffice in this regard. He writes: "Terrible and overwhelming as these phenomena are, such sudden and violent manifestations of the subterranean energy must not be regarded as the only or the chief of their effects. The internal forces continually at work within the earth's crust, perform a series of most important functions in connection with the economy of the globe; and were the actions of those forces to die out, our planet would soon cease to be fit for the habitation of living beings. . . . By the admirable balancing of the external and internal forces of our own globe, the conditions necessary to animal and vegetable existence are almost constantly maintained, and those interruptions of such conditions produced by hurricanes and floods, by volcanic outbursts and earthquakes, may safely be regarded as the insignificant accidents of what is on the whole a very perfectly working piece of machinery."

therefore, as an earthquake, is not only a demand for miraculous interference which is most inconsistent on the part of unbelief, but also for that which, according to expert scientific testimony, would only result in depopulating the earth. It is at least better that a few mortals should be sufferers, than that the whole race should perish.

The very worst that can be truly said, then, in regard to these phenomena, however we confess them to be tragic in their effect upon limited numbers of our fellow creatures, is, in Dr. Tennant's words,[1] that they "are but the inevitable by-products of the self-same course of Nature which on the whole ministers to life and health". Unbelief must be very hard pressed to find in such a residuum a reason for the bitter invectives so often hurled at the present scheme of things. Mr. J. Fiske had no reputation for "orthodoxy," but his summary is both true and weighty.

> "To say that the ways of Providence are inscrutable, is still something more than an idle platitude, and there is still room for the belief that, could we raise the veil that enshrouds eternal truth, we should see that behind nature's cruellest works there are secret springs of divinest tenderness and love." [2]

But this is far from being the whole case. Human suffering may always be divided into two categories, that which we can prevent or heal, and that which we cannot. There is no little room for plain speech in regard to both of these.

(i) As to the former, the instinct within us which shrinks from pain and rejoices in health, is both natural and divine. On the broadest plane it must

[1] "Origin and Propagation of Sin," p. 135.
[2] "Through Nature to God," p. 46.

be affirmed that disease is not the will of God, and that Chas. Kingsley was warranted in his avowal, "I will no more say that God made me sick, than that he made me a sinner". Therein he did but echo the Master who "went about healing all manner of sickness and disease amongst the people". The sneer of unbelief that when the unquestionable physical and ethical value of pain itself is recognized, we thereby welcome it for its own sake, is altogether uncalled for. As a matter of fact, those who most utterly believe in the moral and spiritual value of pain, as part of a divinely benevolent scheme, are the foremost workers in all efforts to relieve and prevent suffering.

(ii) Moreover, in regard to that which at present we cannot either wholly prevent, or always heal, there is much to be truly said which should check the diatribes of scepticism, and in no small measure reassure the Christian heart.

(1) Even on the low level of physical existence, as pointed out above by Sir Frederick Treves, pain is life's preservative. It is nature's warning bell, and tells us of the injury or danger which, if not heeded, would result in the destruction of the whole body. It were small gain to any man if on a cold winter's night he could put his feet into the fire without feeling any harm, and then presently find himself painlessly devoid of feet.

(2) It is equally true that pain is often a moral protest and check. Moral evil is great enough in this poor world as it is. What it would be if there were no preventive or retributive checks through pain, who can say? Dr. Gant, as an expert observer, may well hereupon express his testimony—

> "With relation, therefore, to both body and soul, suffering is not a curse but a blessing in disguise. The transgression of moral law is

productive of the larger proportion of human suffering in the body; and although when traceable to this source pain may be regarded as the punishment of evil doing, it is only a wholesome correction in infinite mercy for the maintenance of both body and soul alive."[1]

(3) Certainly also pain has been the chief intellectual educator of mankind. Had man been created as incapable of pain as some would-be philanthropists demand, he would yet have been in the condition of the primeval savage. Or may be lower, for even the savage learnt the use of fire, which he would never have done had he not been sensitive to the painfulness of cold. If civilization is at all better than savagery, it is because pain has whipped up the mind of man to levels above the brute. As it is, even now, all attempts to educate an ordinary child without the infliction of pain of any kind, would be abortive. One might, indeed, with real truth, go much farther, and say that some of the noblest enrichments of higher realms of thought have been the result of suffering. There is ample testimony that the heritage of intellectual profit which has come to us from such teachers as Dante, Darwin, Tennyson, F. W. Robertson, and R. L. Stevenson, etc., would never have been what it is but for the suffering which seemed to hinder but really made them what they were.

(4) When it comes to lofty character in general, the result is still nobler and more unquestionable.

[1] "The Mystery of Suffering," by Dr. F. J. Gant, F.R.C.S., whose competence to speak may be best expressed in his own words: "Having been actively engaged in the relief of human suffering for a period of forty-five years, during thirty-seven of which I was a hospital surgeon, it has been my lot to witness more of the turmoils and distress in the body and soul of man than any other sphere of experience in relation to mankind could have offered for contemplation".

(*a*) On the broad scale no sentence can be more true than that of Dr. Illingworth—"The pleasures of each generation evaporate in air; it is their pains that increase the spiritual momentum of the world".[1] And by the side of it the palpable folly of those who sigh for a perfectly painless world in which "health should be made catching instead of disease," becomes manifest. We should in such case exchange a world of noble endeavour for the pitiful delights of an enormous crêche, a mere bipedal reproduction and perpetuation of the unmoral monsters of the Cretaceous period. (*b*) It must also be remembered that all the vilest and cruellest deeds on record have been and are yet perpetrated by healthy men and women. Nero and Charles Peace had perfectly sound bodies; whilst some, if not most, of the sweetest and noblest actions that lift humanity highest above brutal levels, have been and are yet done by invalids. (*c*) Even amongst ordinary and respectable society, it may be truly remarked that the hardest and least admirable of characters are to be found amongst those who never know ache or pain, whose example, if generally followed, would resolve mankind into a mere mob of isolated selfish units. On the other hand, (*d*) the sympathy which bespeaks the tenderest and divinest fellowship, and the solidarity which connotes human brotherhood, are evoked by suffering and not by enjoyment. It is "fellow-feeling" in sorrow that "makes us wondrous kind," not perpetual painlessness or sensational gratification. Even amongst the opponents of the Christian view of Providence, we cannot but see that the best parts of their nature are those developed by the very pains and miseries that they so vehemently denounce. The writer of "God and My Neighbour," who so vigorously asserts that "in face of a knowledge of

[1] "Lux Mundi," p. 124.

life and the world, we cannot reasonably believe in a Heavenly Father," and shows himself only ridiculous as a world-making philosopher, yet in actual dealing with the dark and pitiful side of life, becomes a noble incarnation of chivalry and pity, of tenderness and unselfishness. These assuredly make manhood more divine than all the muscle of a Sandow, or the money-making cleverness of a Vanderbilt, or the brain of a Haeckel, or the power of a Napoleon, or the sensual self-gratification of a Nero. Mr. Hall Caine has only spoken the truth in saying that

> "If in the darkness of the mystery of suffering we do not see the Divine face, we ought at least to see the lamp of human virtue. Take suffering out of the world, and what is left of heroism, and patience, and self-sacrifice?"

Enough has been said to show that, even on natural lines, the darkness of the mystery of suffering ought not to prevent our seeing the Divine face with at least sufficient clearness to save us from pessimism and despair. When we are modest enough to remember the limitations of our faculties, and appreciate the fact that there is not one single riddle of the universe which science is able to solve, it should cease to trouble us that we cannot explain to our own satisfaction all that happens in the course of nature to such marvellously complex beings as ourselves.[1] There is certainly nothing in such failure

[1] Sir Oliver Lodge, commenting upon the pessimistic quatrain of Omar Khayyam—

> Ah Love, could thou and I with Fate conspire,
> To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,
> Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
> Remould it nearer to the Heart's desire?—

well says, "The universe is in no way limited to our conceptions. If

to forbid our listening to the world's greatest and best Teacher, when He gives us, on the warrant of His own character and life and example, a more comforting assurance and a larger hope than all the best in nature warrants. The total validity of His claims to reveal to humanity the actual and eternal Fatherhood, may be discussed elsewhere. This, at least, we know; that in Him the mystery of pain found its bitterest core; and in Him also submissive trust in the eclipsed Fatherhood was exhibited to the uttermost. The two absolutely unmistakable features of His message to men are, the actual and unlimited love of the Father, and the assurance that this our present life is not the only realm of its operation. His triumph over death, with all that followed, is the pledge of the reliability of His good tidings.

It would, indeed, be a very serious shock to faith if it could be unequivocally shown that Nature, which He ever regarded as the Father's handiwork, contradicted what He thus taught. But we have seen that it is not so. It is true we have no all-sufficing explanation of life's darker side. The amount, and intensity, and distribution of suffering often bewilder and sadden us. But when exaggeration and confusion, sensationalism and misrepresentation, have been cleared away: when with calm discernment, even though through tearful eyes, we survey the whole case fairly, we find so much comfort intermingled with the sorrow, so much good in the ill, so much light coming with the darkness, that our revolt of heart yields to deeper conviction of mind. Sorrow, suffering, disappointment, calamity, early deaths, remain the tragedies we have always

we could grasp the entire scheme of things, so far from wishing to shatter it to bits and then remould it, we should hail it as better and more satisfying than any of our random imaginings."

felt them to be. But we are driven, in spite of ourselves, to own that there is another side. These contradictions of what is after all our lower self, tend ever to develop the higher. They urge us to "move upward, working out the beast," to put away childish things, and lay claim to a nobler destiny. Manhood fighting with Giant Despair in the valley of the shadow of death, is beyond all question something worthier, higher, nobler, than the sleekest beast that finds nothing to do or bear but wallow in the mud and bask in the sunshine. Nature's laws are confessedly severe. But they so serve us when we obey them, as to leave no honest mind in doubt that they are our friends, not our foes. They ever disclose, when we are not too blinded with passion or folly to see it, a "power not ourselves that makes for righteousness". They become, indeed, to echo Paul's words in a wider sense, "our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ".

In a word, the true map of this our present state of being, is not a black ground with some streaks of white upon it, but a white ground with streaks of black. There may well come moments when the problems of pain bewilder us by their intensity and extent. But then a gentle hand is laid upon our tear-dimmed eyes, and a voice that carries in itself its own trustworthiness whispers—"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Believe in God; believe also in Me." It is such a voice certainly which the human heart most longs, most needs, to hear. And when all nature's lessons have been patiently learned, they do not drive us away from, but rather bid us turn to, the only One who in mortal speech has ever dared to say—"I am the light of the world—Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest".

WHAT IS THERE IN GOD TO FEAR?

"God is spirit."

"God is light."

"God is love."

"Our God is a consuming fire."

"There are some who say that God is unfeeling Law, while the Christians tell us that God is love; there again I think that science has decided something. At first sight the witness of science is all for rigid law, and there are many who look no further; yet the right conclusion is not that love is not behind, but that if there be love, it must be perfect love. We cannot believe now in a love divine which wavers and changes, and has moods and tempers. Clear the word of all that weakens and debases that loving self-surrender of the noblest of mortals, and you will see more and more clearly that the awful sternness of Nature is no greater—and may well be no other—than the sternness of perfect love in doing its work of love. If Nature wavered, this would prove that God is at any rate not perfect love."

—Dr. GWATKIN, "The Knowledge of God".

"With relation, therefore, to both body and soul, suffering is not a curse but a blessing in disguise.

"The transgression of moral law is productive of the larger proportion of human suffering in the body; and although when traceable to this source, pain may be regarded as the punishment of evil doing, it is only a wholesome correction in infinite mercy for the maintenance of both body and soul alive."

—Dr. F. C. GANT, F.R.C.S., "The Mystery of Suffering".

"No believer in the good God imagines that the impartial order of this world expresses the whole of Him. If He seems to hide Himself in indifference behind the impersonal order, Christian doctrine denies the indifference. It declares that whether we discern Him or not, He is there, the indwelling God, dealing with men in the realm of a spiritual existence that ranks above the order that seems impersonal; caring for all, doing the work of an invisible friend, uttering Himself in every instructive voice, communicating with every living soul, providing for destinies as yet unseen. If His creatures seem wronged by the impartial working of His universe, still the deeper truth is that in Him they live and move and have their being, and His tender mercies are over all His works."

—Dr. W. N. CLARKE, "The Christian Doctrine of God".

CHAPTER III

WHAT IS THERE IN GOD TO FEAR?

The considerations which follow in this section take theism for granted. They will be meaningless for atheists, profitless for agnostics. But it is more than possible that agnosticism may result from unworthy thoughts of God, no less than through the usually alleged impossibility of knowing anything reliable concerning Him. In times when the mind is enlarged by the teachings of science, and the heart made more tender through world-wide acquaintance with the struggles of human life, there cannot but be a revolt from the narrow, petty, harsh, and cruel conceptions of Deity which satisfied some former theologians. Even the Bible, if taken on the old lines, and treated as one homogeneous whole of verbal inspiration, lends itself to a frightful travesty of truth. Representations of God are thrust upon the modern mind which are not only in themselves unwarranted and unworthy, but supply all too effective material for iconoclasm like that of Mr. Bradlaugh during the closing periods of the nineteenth century, and Mr. Blatchford at the commencement of the twentieth. Says the latter :—

> "As for the biblical God, Jahweh or Jehovah, I shall try to show from the Bible itself that He was not all wise, nor all powerful, nor omnipresent, that He was not merciful nor just, but that on the contrary He was fickle, jealous, dishonourable, immoral, vindictive, barbarous and cruel. And yet in the inspired Book, in the

> Holy Bible, this awful creature is still enshrined as God the Father Almighty." [1]

Language such as this, or even more severe, cannot be truly said to be without any justification. Only too many instances might be given from some pulpits, from not a little out-door preaching, and from not a few "Gospel" publications in the form of tracts, booklets, etc., which by their lack of discrimination between the Old Testament and the New, and their refusal to treat the Bible rationally, open the door wide for such comments as the foregoing.

The one thing certain is that the modern mind will not tolerate such an ideal. The book just quoted speaks in truculent fashion of "Jehovah the adopted Heavenly Father of Christianity". If that were true, Christianity would be doomed. The writer ought to know that it is not true. But unfortunately many of his readers who know no better will take it from him as true, and be correspondingly alienated from everything Christian.

This is precisely what is happening in a vastly greater number of cases than most of the Churches, with their superficial appeals for optimism, are aware. But there are, happily, many wiser, truer and nobler conceptions of God to be found in the Christian teaching of to-day. Sometimes, however, as is customary in human affairs, these go to an opposite extreme, equally unwarranted and unworthy. From a God of savagery they pass to one of softness. From the hardness and harshness of an ancient tribal deity, they turn to a magnified modern man given over to *laissez-faire*.

Meanwhile the truth abides firm that the foundation of all religion is the thought of God, in some form or another. All religion that merits the name

[1] "God and My Neighbour," pp. 47, 56.

may be said to involve three things, an object of worship, an ideal of service, and a bond of obligation. But it is plain that both these latter depend for their nature upon the first. It is the conception of God which determines ultimately the total content and influence of any religion. "Like priest like people," is not more true than "like God like priest". This is the sure ground of the claim on behalf of Christianity that it is the noblest of all faiths, viz. because it has the purest, loftiest, worthiest conception of God as its basis. In this conception—to put it in simplest brevity—there are four elements—reality, personality, incomprehensibility, fatherhood. Of these, reality is a necessity of thought for which no apology need be made. Incomprehensibility is a general as well as necessary acknowledgment which calls for no exposition. But the two remaining features of Deity, according to Christian faith, do require all the emphasis that careful and honest thought can give them. There cannot be greater or more important matters for consideration in the whole realm of religion, than the actuality and the quality of the Divine Personality.

The former of these, we all know, is assumed throughout the whole Bible. This is done so simply, so naturally, so invariably, that the ordinary Bible reader thinks nothing of it. Much in the same way as the sailor notes the position of a certain star and thinks no more about it. It is a star, and it is there. That is enough. To explain that every such star is a sun, and is millions of millions of miles away, is as unnecessary information for his purpose as probably unwelcome. Yet it is absolutely necessary that some one should notice these further facts and their significance; or else the whole realm of modern science would become a chaos. It is no less true that whatever becomes of pragmatists,

learned or unlearned, there must be a philosophy of religion; and so far as the Christian religion is concerned, its unequivocal starting point, as well as its unmistakable basis, is the personality of God. It is not, however, incumbent upon us here to plunge into abysmal depths of metaphysics such as would befit a philosophical treatise. In homelier yet no less careful summary it must suffice to say that neither philosophy nor science can put a veto on such a thought of God. Speaking for the latter, Sir Oliver Lodge has recently said with pertinent truth :—

> "People sometimes seek to deny such attributes as are connoted by the word 'personality' in the Godhead—they say it is a human conception. Certainly it is a human conception; it is through humanity that it has been revealed. Why seek to deny it? God transcends personality, objectors say. By all means; transcends all our conceptions infinitely, transcends every revelation which has ever been vouchsafed; but the revelations are true as far as they go, for all that."[1]

George Eliot's objection that an infinite personality is an absurdity, because so utterly incomprehensible by us, is sufficiently met by the reply that our own personality is equally incomprehensible. But for that reason to pronounce it unreal, would be irrational, seeing that the very pronunciation would prove it real. Only a person can form and utter a deliberate judgment. But what "I am I" means, no one has yet been able, or is ever likely to be able, to say.

Again, Prof. Haeckel's crude assertion that "the notion of a personal God has been rendered quite untenable by the recent advances of monistic science"

[1] "Hibbert Journal," July, 1911, p. 703.

—may be dismissed as quite contrary to fact, just as his further definition of personality is quite contrary to philosophy. "We can never recognize in God," he says, "a personal being, or, in other words, an individual of limited extension in space, or even of human form." Such an attempt to beg the whole question by limiting all personality to human beings, is unworthy of a serious teacher. The well-known words of one of Germany's most eminent philosophers sum up the whole case, so far as philosophy is concerned, much more truly. In his *Microcosmus* Herman Lotze wrote :—

> "In point of fact we have little ground for speaking of the personality of finite beings. It is an ideal, and like all that is ideal belongs unconditionally only to the infinite. Perfect personality is in God only ; to all finite minds there is allotted but a pale copy thereof; the finiteness of the finite is not a producing condition of this personality but a limit and hindrance of its development."[1]

Here, therefore, we assume the reality of the Divine personality. Being ourselves undeniable though inexplicable units of thought, feeling, and will, we cannot possibly credit the Author of our being with less capacity than ourselves. To such an attitude, the words of our eminent scientist apply—

[1] "So too," says the late Prof. Bowne in his able work on Theism, "we must reverse the common speculative dogma and declare that proper personality is possible only to the Absolute. The very objections urged against the personality of the Absolute show the incompleteness of human personality. The absolute knowledge and self-possession which are necessary to perfect personality, can be found only in the absolute and infinite being upon whom all things depend. Of this, our finite personality can never be more than the feeblest and faintest image" (p. 167).

> "Let us not be discouraged by simplicity. Real things are simple. Human conceptions are not altogether misleading. Our view of the universe is a partial one, but not an untrue one. The Christian idea of God is a genuine representation of reality."[1]

But the greatest question of all yet remains. If God be personal, what is the character of His personality? A person, we know too well, may be wicked as well as good, cruel as well as tender. Personality, indeed, is the source not only of all that is best on earth, but also of all that is worst. Our dearest friend must be a person. But a person may be also our deadliest enemy. To say that such a one is a person, is to say nothing, until the character of his personality is made known. Is he a monster or a father?—a Nero, or a St. Francis? This is precisely, and above all else, what we want to know concerning God, when it is once granted that He is both real and personal.

It cannot be said too plainly, in these days, that herein the Old Testament is not for us a sufficient guide. There are great and grave difficulties associated with it which cannot honestly be ignored. If Christ had simply endorsed its conceptions, Christianity would never have come into existence. Nor can Christianity now be maintained without His modifications, corrections, and enlargements, of the Old Testament thought of God. How far He was from simply endorsing all that is recorded in Deuteronomy, or Judges, or Kings, with a "Thus saith the Lord" attached to it, His own words bear abundant witness. He offered no proof of the Divine existence, and He unhesitatingly accepted the assumption of the Divine personality which permeates the whole collec-

[1] Sir Oliver Lodge, "Hibbert Journal," July, 1911, p. 716.

tion of Jewish scriptures. But He did much more. Everywhere and always He insisted on the Fatherhood of God, with a firmness, a clearness and a fullness which had never been approached before, and have never been equalled, let alone surpassed, since. We may bear in faithful memory all the associations of the "Golden Bough"; all the partial visions of poets outside Judaism like Aratus, whom Paul did not hesitate to quote; and even all the loftier as well as more wistful expressions of prophets and psalmists amidst the chosen people. Yet it remains not merely true but the most irrefragable of truths, that for an unmistakable and full-orbed conception of God as the universal and eternal Father, humanity is indebted to Jesus Christ as to no other prophet, or seer, or poet, or teacher, that it has ever known.

This is, indeed, His most vivid and indisputable claim to originality. For His unfolding of the Divine Fatherhood is such as to rule out all comparison with other gropings and findings, whilst it anticipates all questions which might otherwise arise out of the imperfection of our human ideal. It may certainly be hoped that in our human midst fatherhood still ranks high, as a synonym for all that is good and noble and gracious. But we cannot forget that there are many types of fatherhood amongst the nations, and some much more severe than tender, much more stern than kind. Christ's own words could, on occasion, be very strong in condemnation; and it would be dishonest as well as useless to attempt to conceal from ourselves or from each other, the severe side of the many utterances of the Apostles who spoke in His name. So that there is room for most careful as well as thankful appreciation of the true message of the Christian Gospel hereupon. That a real father should be loved by his children, we all agree. But should he also be feared? The general

conception, supported by practical family life, is that the mother is loved and the father feared. Is that as it should be, and is that the clue to our understanding and appreciation of the Fatherhood of God?

The Christian appeal must, of course, be to the New Testament. But not to a merely mechanical catena of texts. The only satisfactory appeal is to a full and fair induction from the whole, in the light of that honest scrutiny to which both Christ Himself and the Apostles ever urged their hearers.

One unmistakable truth then emerges, viz. that throughout the whole of the New Testament there is no possible divorce between love and fear, as the rightful attitude of the human heart towards God. "Behold, therefore," says the Apostle Paul, "the goodness and severity of God." With that all-comprehensive ideal, Christ's delineation of the Fatherhood always and entirely agrees. When, therefore, amidst the modern unrest, we shrink equally from the extremes of bygone thoughtless attribution to God of the passions of men depicted in certain portions of the Old Testament, and the modern easy-going indifference which would make Him a mere lotus-eater amongst Olympian gods, it is to this unification of love and fear that we must turn, for such a conception of God as will commend Christianity to the sincere thought of to-day. If indeed the Christian faith is to come unscathed out of the critical crucible, and become, as its adherents desire, the world-religion of the twentieth century, a larger, worthier thought of God is as indispensable as is the rising of the sun if night is to be turned into day.

In hope that a plain answer to the question of this section may be some contribution towards such a conception, the whole case may here be summarized under five distinctive truths. These will

differ greatly from the "five points" of former Calvinism, but the difference will be the measure at once of their truthfulness and their significance.

I. In God as revealed by Jesus Christ, there is absolutely nothing to fear except His love.

II. All the wrath, anger, severity, attributed to God in the Gospel, are but the expression of His love in presence of evil.

III. In the presence of evil, all love that is love must become fearful, just in the degree that it is real.

IV. This severe side of love Divine is real enough and fearful enough to move all human nature to stand in awe of it.

V. There is always one, and only one, way of escape from the severity of the love of God, and that is by turning back to His love's tenderness.

All real preaching of the Gospel consists in making this five-fold truth clear to human hearts, and forceful in human lives. In such a commission, when all that it includes is apprehended, there is programme enough to occupy every Christian church and every individual believer.

I. There is absolutely nothing in God to fear, except His love. That is the great main unmistakable message of the Gospel of Christ to mankind. In the New Testament references to the Divine nature—by which, for the Christian mind, the worth of all the Old Testament allusions must ever be tested—there are many adjectives employed to signify qualities, but only four emphatic substantival assertions. "God is spirit"; "God is love"; "God is light"; "God is a consuming fire". Of these the first two may be termed literal, and the latter two figurative. But there is a closer relationship between them which is worthy of regard. All love, to be love, must be spiritual. To represent God as the

Spirit of Love is to exhibit in the form at once most simple, sublime, and tender, what may reverently be called the bright aspect of His nature. To say that God is light, is a figure which at first glance seems also only bright. But our modern knowledge tells us with unmistakable emphasis that the light which is the life of the physically higher and worthier, is the death of the low and the unworthy. Against the noxious microbes which we now know are our deadliest enemies in body, sunshine is a mightier defender, because a more potent destroyer of such disease-bringing foes, than all the medicines and disinfectants of science put together. In this—for us most merciful—sense, the light is also a consuming fire. These two, therefore, may well be employed to represent the sterner aspects of the Divine character.

There are in the New Testament, as already acknowledged, many references to God which are at first glance nothing less than terrible. The closing portion, popularly known as "Revelations," has not only become a critical problem, but has all too plentifully supplied the uncritical with material for well-meant but luridly false thoughts concerning God's dealings with men. Yet it must be owned that unless this book be given up altogether, there are representations of the Divine character which are unmistakably awe-inspiring. The Apostles also, alike in their preaching and in their letters, unequivocally refer to Divine "wrath," both here and hereafter. Whilst Jesus himself, besides similarly severe references on various occasions, sums up this aspect of the Father's nature in a single solemn sentence. "I will warn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, who after He has killed, has power to cast into Gehenna: yes, I say to you, Fear Him."[1]

[1] Luke xii. 5.

For our present purpose of brief exposition, however, the vivid words of the writer to the Hebrews will sum up all these, and give us a statement than which nothing can be stronger [1] or more truly representative of all that is fearful in the Divine nature. Cut away from its context, as, alas, too many similar utterances of the New Testament generally are, the truth that "God is a consuming fire" would be terrifying indeed, and might make the Divine Fatherhood to be but an object of dread. But on fair and rational treatment, as part of a whole, it assumes a very different aspect. How far from suggesting mere terror was the intention of the writer, may be clearly seen from two plain facts. First, that this is the very chapter which, of all the New Testament writings, speaks most fully and unequivocally of the tender love of the "Father of spirits". Then, also, from v. 18 to 23, we have vividly set forth the contrast between the severity of the Old Covenant under Moses, and the New Covenant of which Jesus is the mediator. Thus we are free to look unflinchingly into the heart of a phrase which so significantly summarizes the fearful aspect of the Fatherhood of God.

To speak generally, "consuming fire" seems a suggestion full of terror and horror to us, because of our physical sensitiveness to the pain of any small burn, and our human helplessness in presence of great conflagrations which destroy property and homes and lives. But any such dreadful connotation of the phrase is expressly excluded here by the context. Whether a consuming fire is to be a horror or a benediction, depends always and altogether upon what it consumes. If it be true that

[1] Matt. xxv. 31-46 is not forgotten here, but its significance has been so much distorted and abused in building up a doctrine of eternal punishment with which it has nothing to do, that it is best not to refer to it unless there be space for fair and full exposition.

God is love, plainly the only "consuming fire" which truly represents Him, must be incandescent love. Can we not then judge from our own small but real experiences, what love consumes when it is burning with intensity? At least this is certain beyond all doubt, that it never consumes the loved one. If, then, there be any truth in the oft-repeated words that "God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten son" for its redemption, no fire from Him, or in Him, can ever consume those whom He so loves. As surely as the fearful fire in the hottest of our furnaces wherein gold is purified, never consumes the gold but only separates it from the dross, so is the love of the Father, even in its most fearful manifestation, working always for human ennoblement, never for human destruction.

It may, however, be thought that if God be God, enshrined in all the awfulness with which our modern knowledge invests him, he must be fearful because illimitable in power and majesty. And it is overwhelmingly true—as Sir Oliver Lodge has well reminded the world of science at the close of his Romanes Lecture on the nature of matter—that the physical universe is more than sufficient, when we carefully consider it, "to elicit feelings of reverent awe and adoration". But before power, even omnipotent power, is rightly an object of fear, surely it is necessary to know whether it is for us or against us. Now, if the message of Jesus merits any regard at all, this is settled for evermore. His whole Gospel is in one word—"Emmanuel". For those who think of Christ as in any sense "the Truth," all question here is at an end. "God is for us," not against us. He "is the Saviour of all men," asserts the Apostle. The very least that such a word can mean is that whatever there is of might, and majesty, and power, and awfulness, in the Divine nature, it is all

and always on the side of poor humanity. A little child taken into the engine-room of one of our modern mammoth liners, might well be terror-stricken at the display of immeasurable force, and exclaim—"What fearful engines!" But the very fearfulness becomes a source of gladness when it is made plain that every throb of that ponderous crank, every revolution of that fearful shaft, brings all on board happily on their way, and promises every little one to take him safely home. With no less assurance does the Christ of the Gospels give us to understand that all things are so surely working together for our good, that all the awfulness of a law-governed universe is for, and not against us. The huge steam-hammer in our iron works which at one moment can smash a mass of metal with such tremendous force, and then in skilled hands come down upon an egg without cracking it, is but a poor illustration of the infinite power which directs the swing of suns and comets in their vast orbits, and yet is said by Jesus to be so tenderly solicitous for our human welfare that the very hairs of our head are numbered.

II. What, then, it may be asked, becomes of all the "anger," and "wrath," and "severity," which are so unmistakably attributed, even by Jesus Himself, as well as the Apostles, to the Divine nature? That they are echoes, though modified and mellowed, of Old Testament utterances, is too plain to need reiteration. If there is much in the Jewish scriptures which the Christian mind cannot but disown, there is also much which it must accept and endorse. Are, then, all the strong assertions concerning the "wrath" of God, His "anger" against sin, with all the solemn warnings and threatened judgements in regard to evil-doing, to be minimized, discounted to trifles, dismissed to forgetfulness? Assuredly not. Neither the Master Himself, nor any one of His

servants, gives us any warrant for such procedure. But what we do learn, in "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," is a fuller apprehension from His standpoint than ancient prophet or seer or psalmist could ever give their fellows, that the "anger" of God is always and only the expression of His love in the presence of evil.

The poet's phrase "all's love and yet all's law" has imprinted itself deeply on the modern mind. But it is even more true in the reverse. "All's law and yet all's love." That, at least, with unmeasured emphasis, is the message of Christ's Gospel to mortal men. The most common—and for that very reason the most forceful—illustration of this in our daily life, has been sufficiently referred to on a previous page. The laws of nature, in all their fearful resistlessness, are love to us so long as we obey them. It is we ourselves who turn their goodness into severity, by our neglect or disobedience. They are only crushing when we are rebellious. And their general working together for the good of humanity, is so marked as to warrant the inference that the very severity of the punishment, when men set nature's laws at defiance, is intended to teach them that they are turning away from good to ill, and are making fearful foes of the very forces which would be their best friends. Physical illustrations of moral truths are necessarily incomplete, but we may well mark how the water which generally serves us so well in its life-sustaining properties, turns to generally unhelpful if not death-dealing ice in presence of cold. Yet is every threatening iceberg, all the time, potentially water. So does the whole Bible teach us, but more especially the message of Jesus, that the love of God, however real and tender, is hardened into anger and becomes fearful when it is met by moral evil, or treated with rebellion's cold disdain. None

the less is the very wrath of God, always and only, potential love.

The Old Testament gives us a vivid and typical instance in the opening words of Isaiah, as Dr. G. A. Smith forcefully points out. "Because of all books the Bible is the only one which interprets conscience as the love of God, so is it the only one that can combine His pardon with His reproach, and as Isaiah does in a single verse, proclaim His free forgiveness as the conclusion of His bitter quarrel. 'Come, let us bring our reasoning to a close saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'"[1] Then, if we turn to the severest chapter in the New Testament, Matt. XXIII., we find that even there the fearful denunciations of wrong melt away at the end into heart-breaking tenderness of lamentation over the wrong-doers. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." So, always, be the consuming fire as fearful as it may, the anger of God, according to the Gospel of Jesus, is ever and only incandescent love.

III. This turning of love divine into severity under special conditions, is not caprice but holy principle; for in the presence of evil all love that is love, must become fearful just in proportion as it is real. If, as the Gospel of Jesus would have us understand, the love of God is the most real of all love, then, when faced by moral evil, must it become in intensest degree a consuming fire of anger. Yet, may this word "anger," and its correlative, "wrath," be altogether misleading. It is the misfortune of human speech, and a sinister testimony to the presence

[1] "Commentary on Isaiah," Vol. I, p. 13.

of moral evil in our human midst, that no one of these terms is really accurate when applied to God. Divine anger differs from human anger as distinctly as the knife of the surgeon, in his skilled hands and with his tender intention, differs from the dagger-thrust of the assassin. Anger in a man towards his fellow, inevitably connotes more or less of the spite which desires revenge for some fancied or real wrong, in the infliction of pain upon the offender. But there is no more of this element in the Divine anger than coal in a diamond—though both are carbon. The wrath of God does not desire to inflict pain upon the sinner, any more than a good and tender-hearted father wishes to inflict punishment upon a disobedient child. If, indeed, pain is associated with the Divine anger, there are always two distinctive features inseparable from such "wrath". The express object of the pain is not the pleasure of the inflicter, but the good of the sufferer. And furthermore, he who inflicts the pain always suffers with the offender on whom it falls. Both these traits are found in the dealing of good fathers with wayward children.

Some time ago in a northern city, no small indignation was aroused in regard to a father—a well-known Free Church minister—whose child, in spite of many warnings, persisted in playing with fire. As a final lesson and punishment in one, the father lit a match and deliberately with it burned the child's finger until a blister came. This was said by not a few to be "cruel," "barbarous," "shameful," and the like. But in that same city, in one week, two children were burned to death from the very folly against which this father sought effectually to warn his child. When the sentimentalism of his denouncers is put aside, the principles of such an action are as worthy as plain. It is certain that nothing but the child's

good was intended. It is no less sure that the father suffered in the infliction of the pain quite as much as the child. Whether the warning was effective or not, through all the after years, is irrelevant. It was assuredly most likely to be, and with that the father's responsibility and opportunity of influence ended. On the world scale of humanity, such principles are even more true and applicable. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live." In regard to the chosen people, can anything be at once more pathetic and fearful than the prophet's record—

> "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved His holy spirit; therefore He was turned to be their enemy and Himself fought against them. For from of old men have not heard, neither hath the eye seen, a God beside thee, who worketh for him that waiteth for him."[1]

Or, again, to learn on the smaller scale of our own affections how love must sometimes hate, mark the young man starting business life with all fair promise of success and happiness, his father's joy, his mother's pride. But presently boon companions lure him to looseness, gambling, drink; so that the promising career is blighted, and instead of worthy character developing like a noble edifice, there are only the revolting relics of what might have been. Could the father's love become anything else than a consuming fire towards the evils that have ruined his loved one? What does the mother feel when the

[1] Is. LXIII. 9, 10; LXIV. 4.

home is invaded by the dreaded fever, and she sees her darlings go down one by one in its fell clutch? Does not her love for them become consuming hate for the disease, even such that she would do anything in her power to stamp its curse out of the earth? That, on the immeasurable scale, is the true and only meaning of the anger of God—love made fearful by evil. How tenderly and vehemently the prophets expressed this, is too plain to call for prolonged quotation. "O do not this abominable thing that I hate"— is the summary of the word that came to Jeremiah. But the reason of the hate is made as unmistakable as the anger which is "poured forth". The anger of God is but love's hate of the evil that is ruining the loved one. In the light of the New Testament, which is as much fiercer against evil as tenderer towards those who do it, the principle is illuminated to the uttermost. As the Father of men, God so hates evil because He so loves us; and there is in the Divine nature no other anger than that which embodies the heartache of His own protest against the evil which alienates from Him His earthly children.

IV. Certainly all that can be expressed in words, no less than all that we see in facts, goes to show that the Divine anger is in itself a terrible reality. The solemn warning of Jesus, "Yes, I say to you, fear Him"—should avail to prevent any man from thinking either that love can be trifled with, or that the hate into which evil transforms it is a light matter. That can never be. The two elements in the case can never be either separated or confused. The anger is indeed love transformed, but the transformation is real. The anger, though free from anything like human malice, is terrible in its actuality. There is overwhelming reason for saying "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the

living God". How frightful are some of the bodily results of sin, perhaps medical men and Christian ministers, together with those actually engaged in philanthropic work, only know. If all the disease that is due to moral evil were eliminated from humanity's experience, there would be scarcely any vocation at all for doctors.

But this is by no means the whole result of sin, any more than in a well-regulated family the banishment of a disobedient child from the table at a meal, would be the whole effect of persistent wrongdoing. Human nature is undeniably complex, and may suffer far more in mind and heart than in body. Who would not rather endure bodily pain, than know the anguish of what we call a broken heart? No form of physical suffering is dreaded so much as the loss of one's reason. All experience testifies that it is in the highest realms of our being that we are capable of most loss and suffering. It is here that what we are obliged by the poverty of our language to term the "anger" of God, comes upon men most terribly. The pain and loss which ensue from sin—in addition to all possible bodily result—do not consist in something inflicted from without, as a schoolmaster may find it necessary to cane a refractory boy, but of self-caused alienation from the source of all that is best and highest, all that would therefore develop the highest and best within us.

The whole significance of this cannot be expressed in words, but enough can be realized sufficiently in our ordinary circles of home and friends and society, to illustrate the horror of that Divine anger which involves the impossibility of communion with the highest. One hears that pulpits no longer resound with the former direful echoes of "hell," and "damnation," and "eternal torment," etc., and it is, or ought to be, true; for there is

nothing in all the Greek Testament that answers to these verbal malignities as used in modern speech. It cannot be too plainly said that no Christian preacher has any right in the name of the Gospel of Jesus to talk in these days about "damnation," or "torment," or aught else of the kind. Lurid figures from the book of "Revelation" have no more truth or warrant when they are quoted—in isolation from their context—as literal threats for all men, than the Christian hope of the future is to be regarded as residence in a stone-built city, paved with metal, where the only happiness would be to sit linen-clothed in a ring and wave branches of trees for ever and ever. But on the other hand, the strange thing is that some others should allow themselves to imagine that a figurative expression is weaker than a literal one. Surely the opposite is the case. When we say that a man is as hard as a nail, or as keen as a razor, etc., we mean more, not less, than if we should simply pronounce him very hard or keen. To plead against being kept in suspense is intelligible enough ; but a protest against being kept on the tenter-hooks, is not only equally intelligible but more emphatic. Figures of speech come in, we must own, to help us when ordinary language fails. Thus to say that there is no hell of physical torment, here or hereafter, no lake of fire and brimstone, no place of bodily torture at all such as Dante's gruesome imagination conceived, does not diminish, let alone destroy, the terribleness of the severity with which the love of God burns and must for ever burn against evil, until the evil is consumed.

In a word, the greater the horror of the Divine anger, the greater the love it proves. For it is all on our behalf. Were it only for His own sake, we must reverently acknowledge, God could afford to

treat evil as the veriest trifle. Here, the remembrance of the universe as we now know it but the writers of the New Testament did not, becomes unspeakably impressive. This whole world of humanity which seems to us so large, is but a speck in the solar system; whilst this itself is but a speck in the surrounding space which holds countless millions of greater suns, at distances that defy all our powers of apprehension. What if this little world of ours were filled with Neros—could it affect the majesty of the only and awful God? It would no more touch Him than the storm-tossed spray of the ocean can avail to extinguish the sun. Elihu's strong words in the ancient poem become manifold stronger in the light of our modern knowledge :—

"If thou hast sinned, what doest thou against Him?
And if thy transgressions be multiplied what doest thou unto Him?
If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him?
Or what receiveth He at thy hand?
Thy wickedness may hurt a man such as thou art,
And thy righteousness may profit a son of man." [1]

It is indeed a far far cry from the gods of Olympus in their callous isolation, to the Heavenly Father who commissions Jesus—"His only begotten Son" —to say to men "If God so clothe the grass of the field, how much more will He clothe you!" Such words, if they mean anything at all, mean love inexpressible. It is for a love's sake which transcends all earth's language to express, that God "cannot look upon sin with allowance". No one who loves can look on unmoved at that which injures the loved one. No parent can be indifferent to a disease which grips and threatens to ruin a child. The compassion with which Jesus always looked upon lepers, was but a pointer to the Divine compassion

[1] Job xxxv.

which pities the sinner so much as to hate the sin and visit it with anger. The love of God can have no mercy upon that which threatens degradation and destruction to the loved. What pity can the skilled and tender-hearted surgeon show to the cancer which is eating away his patient's life? "Behold then the goodness and severity of God." Did He not love men, He might treat their evil with indifference, and let them sink unhelped, unwarned, unpunished, into everlasting moral degradation. But because His love is real, and not mere religious fiction, therefore He must and does hate the evil, and will visit it with anger so long as it remains evil—

> Whilst life and thought and being last
> Or immortality endures.

V. If all this be true, there is one great corollary. From the real, righteous, terrible anger of God towards evil in men, there is always one and only one way of escape. When Jesus said in this connexion "I am the way—no man cometh unto the Father but by Me"—it was no overwrought imagination of a religious enthusiast. We may know it to be simple reality, independent of critical scrutiny, by means of the experimental test which He himself proposes. "If any man is willing to do His will who sent me, he shall know of the teaching whether it be from God, or whether I speak from myself." The teaching is, that as it is our own known moral evil which turns the love of God to anger, so again is it our repentance from the evil, our being willing to do His will, which turns the anger back to love. How and why it should be so, may be left to theologians to discuss. The plain, wholesome, saving truth for every child of man, is that it is so. "He who would flee from God, must flee to Him." That is the

Gospel in a word. A Gospel made possible, indeed, as well as gracious, by Jesus Christ; veritable "good tidings," about which there neither need be nor ought to be any complication whatever. For the all-embracing proclamation to mankind is, without any respect of persons, that God is always and for ever for us, not against us. For all men, and for every man; now, and for evermore. All the severest condemnations and most solemn warnings against sin, in all its kinds and degrees, are not against us, but against the wrong to which we commit ourselves and for which we are responsible. The responsibility comes naturally and necessarily from all self-committal to wrong on the part of a morally free being. Hence it is practically impossible to separate the man from the evil he does, with its consequences. The man must suffer, even though the Divine anger is directed not against him but against his deed.[1] All the terrible utterances of holy Divine anger are not against the prodigal, but against his leaving his father's home on folly bent; as also against his being content with harlots and swine husks in a far country, where hunger and shame take the place of the home and the father's love. His pain and his heart bitterness were his best friends, in that they brought him to himself, and pointed him back to the home where love and honour were waiting for him.

[1] When certain popular writers say, "We determinists do not denounce men, we denounce acts," two notes must be made. (1) Morally and practically it is impossible to isolate a man from his doings. A man who acts is responsible for the action. No act ever did itself—or is conceivable apart from an actor. (2) The thought-distinction between the man and his act is but the old Christian distinction between the sinner and his sin. It is his, because he is himself in doing it. But he is not his act. His moral freedom makes him responsible for the wrong done, but leaves untouched the distinction between himself and the deed. Thus may God "hate the sin, and yet the sinner love". As in John VII. 53, VIII. 11, etc.

Thus the New Testament doctrine of "Karma" exceeds, both in severity and tenderness, those suggestions from the East which are in some quarters now introduced to the West as new and superior to the Christian Gospel. For according to the teaching of Jesus, love Divine permits no trifling with evil, and offers no hope, either now or hereafter, for any man who knowingly persists in it. Because God is love, therefore the warning—"be not deceived, God is not mocked". Love cannot be mocked at any time. It is too severe. "Whatever a man sows, that will he also reap." Only love declares, as neither Buddhism nor Theosophy can do, that through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the sowing of repentance and trust in Him yield a harvest of forgiveness and of blessed hope which is as real in its reaping as the harvest of ill-doing. "He who sows to his lower self will of that self reap corruption." But also "He who sows to the spirit," i.e. who turns from the evil to the good, "will reap eternal life". To appreciate which fully, we must bear in mind Christ's other word—"This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou hast sent".

It is thus the love of God which is most to be feared. Now and hereafter, the real terror of the Gospel is the helplessness of God. That is, the love that cannot but hate because it is love. It is no real limit to omnipotence when we remind ourselves that God cannot deny Himself. The love that cannot welcome any sinner into communion with itself so long as he clings to his evil, is all the more real love for the refusal. Even our lower natures may teach us this lesson, if we heed them. For, as a painless body would soon be a dead body for want of the friendly though often severe warning of pain—whence it follows that pain is to us an even better friend than pleasure—so is it in the higher realm of

our moral and spiritual being. The wrath of God is really the love that will not let men drift pleasantly and unrebuked to ruin. So that if, here and now, any man persists in evil that would blight and blast his life, it is love that hedges his way with thorns, seeks to stop him by punishment, blocks his downward path with disease, strives to make him turn to good by warnings of worse to follow no less than by invitations to blessing upon repentance.

Then, finally, if death find him unrepentant; if, as Jesus said, he dies "in his sins," carrying with him his degraded self on into eternity, it is love which will pursue him still with terrors and with punishments, self-inflicted truly but no less real or fearful, and will never let him escape until—God only knows when or how, and the words of Jesus do not tell us—he turns from the evil that degrades him, to the love that is yearning over him and waiting with love's untiring patience. If love could make love, if goodness could compel goodness, if the love of God could coerce into turning from evil the moral creatures He has made, then would the dark problem of the future be simplified indeed; for all men would be saved. But there is no real simplicity or comfort in the unthinkable. Omnipotence cannot compel a free being. The whole episode of this world's peopling with moral beings is not "an experiment without risk of failure"—as one good man has printed. For if there be no "risk," there is no experiment. If there be an "experiment," failure must be as possible as success. But the Christian problem of the hereafter is not what God will do, or men will do. It is what God cannot do —and what men can do. Holy love cannot welcome evil into communion with itself. Can the personality which has here perennially persisted in evil, hereafter turn from it to good? We know not.

But this we do know, that he cannot be forced thereto. The last vision, therefore, which the Gospel of Jesus gives us of the persistently impenitent, is that of the waiting, yearning, helplessness of love divine. Beyond that, we cannot seek. It is not needful for ourselves or others that we should. It is enough to get our minds to see, and our hearts to feel—now, henceforth, and for ever—that there is nothing in God to fear except His love. That love, on behalf of our highest good, can be most fearful. And that that very love is waiting for the decision of our every moment, to say whether it shall bless us with the pain that warns us of our evil and its consequences; or with the inspiration, in our struggle for the highest, that always thrilled the heart of Christianity's greatest advocate—"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?"

WHAT IS IT TO BE SAVED?

" Character is fate."—Novalis.

" Love, wheresoever it appears, is in its measure a law-making power. Love is dutiful in thought and deed. And as the lover of his country is free from the temptation to treason, so is he who loves Christ secure from the temptation to injure any human being, whether it be himself or another. He is indeed much more than this. He is bound and he is eager to benefit and bless to the utmost of his power, all that bear his Master's nature, and that not merely with the good gifts of the earth, but with whatever cherishes and trains best the Christ within them."

—Prof. Seeley in " Ecce Homo ".

" In general terms it is hard to resist the conclusion that Episcopacy is radically and fundamentally unchristian. The very conception of a Prince, even of a Dignitary, of the Church, is repugnant to the genius of Christianity. How you can have a Prelacy without having adulation and obsequiousness, with their inevitable effects upon all save the most towering and select natures, one fails to see. Between the figure of a Prince of the Church, and the figure of the lowly Founder of Christianity, what an abyss yawns ! "—W. F. Osborne, " The Faith of a Layman ".

" ' If any man will come after Me, let him ignore himself and take up his cross and follow Me.' If Christ was what St. John tells us, the manifestation of the Divine Word, then He has a right to make that claim upon us ; not otherwise. And if it has been found, as it has been found over and over again, that in experience the people who answer the demand receive the promise, then the historic Christ must be the Christ of St. John's theology."—W. Temple, " The Faith and Modern Thought ".

" The personal factor in religion ; practically for you and me no other factor counts. A thousand poets have written on love, but you will learn more of love in the kiss of a little child, in the pressure of a kind hand, in the soft glance of loyal and tender eyes, than you will in reading all the exquisite and all the true things written about love since the world began. It is so with Christ. Christianity is meaningless to you, till you feel the contact of the soul with Christ.

' The love of Jesus what it is,
None but His loved ones know.' "

—W. J. Dawson, " The Divine Challenge ".

CHAPTER IV

WHAT IS IT TO BE SAVED?

One of the greatest hindrances to the true triumph and beneficent influence of Christianity in the world has always been, and yet is, the misunderstanding or misrepresentation of its principal watchwords. To say nothing about popular notions concerning the being and nature of God, the inspiration of the Bible, and the person of Christ, which may be seen to be untrue and mischievous just in the degree in which they are honestly scrutinized, such all-significant terms as "salvation," "faith," "holiness," "heaven," are all more or less the subjects of confusion, misrepresentation, and often direct contradiction. In many cases they are travestied rather than taught, and made repulsive rather than attractive by their very advocates. Hence it happens that when the plain man is asked what any one of them means, in the majority of cases he neither knows nor cares. Unfortunately also he is able to plead that the churches are by no means agreed, even in these main matters. Sometimes they are in direct opposition; whilst not a little that passes as "Gospel preaching" consists in the reiteration of well-worn platitudes which will not bear a moment's serious examination. As for clear and unanimous teaching, even on the most important and necessary themes, the average pulpit seems to be the last place in the world where one may expect to find it.

All this applies only too truly to the first of the great religious terms mentioned above. "Salva-

tion" is yet, after all the Christian centuries, an uncertain, ill-defined, unreal, uninviting conception, and is presented to the world by the churches in terms that are far from harmonious. If, however, we leave other crucial Christian watchwords for the moment out of account, so long as the New Testament is regarded as authoritative, of one thing there can be no possible doubt, viz. that from the very beginning to the end of the Christian Gospel, the greatest need of humanity and the very purpose of Christ's whole mission, are declared to be "salvation". But the words "saved" and "salvation" have, alas! long since become hackneyed and hollow in common usage. They are such commonplaces in religious parlance as to be too often devoid of all real significance, like a honeycomb out of which all the honey has been squeezed. It is tragically true that throughout Christendom they have to an unmeasured extent become mere vocables without significance, sounds without sense, symbols without any answering reality — if not mere battle-cries between conflicting sects. Small wonder, therefore, that outside the comparatively small circle of Church membership, the modern world ignores them in practice as utterly as the newspapers do in type.

Yet the New Testament is so full of the teaching which these terms summarize, that with them Christianity stands or falls. Unless there can be found and shown some real, weighty, comprehensive, attractive, abiding significance in "salvation," the whole Christian religion is but an age-long delusion, if not also a world-wide snare. Not only has the exhibition of such significance in these terms been the privilege and responsibility of Christendom through all the centuries passed, but it is most certainly the supreme need of the hour for the greater populations of modern Europe—to say nothing here of the East

—if Christianity is to be in coming years anything more than a bankrupt faith. The outlook from the standpoint of the churches is, at the very least, serious. Refreshingly true and sensible, as against the ceaseless reiterations of superficial optimism in some quarters, are the words of a recent Bampton lecturer, whose whole plea merits the earnest consideration of every sincere thinker of to-day.

> "When we look frankly at the present state of Christianity from these three points, its alleged origin, its actual merits as a rule of life, and its effect upon individuals, we are forced to confess that its influence upon mankind at large is, and has been, strangely disproportionate alike to its high claims and to the reasonable expectation of those who saw its beginnings. And if we take a more than historical interest in that disproportion, if we still believe that here and not elsewhere lies the hope of the world, we cannot sit content; we are forced to seek, so far as we may, causes and remedies."[1]

What then says this same calm, kindly, careful observer, in regard to the causes which he rightly suggests we must seek?

> "It cannot, I think, be questioned that the striking contrast between the lives of Christians and the rules which they profess to accept, is the great religious difficulty of the present day. The attitude of the people to the churches to-day is not determined by Higher Criticism or questions of Ceremonial, but by the unsatisfactory lives of professing Christians."[2]

But can any man be a "professing" Christian without professing to be in some sense "saved"? Are not

[1] "Bampton Lectures," 1907, by J. H. F. Peile, p. 14.
[2] ibid. p. 6, 17.

all who are definitely associated with Christian churches, such as ceaselessly seek, and surely in some measure find, "salvation"? Where, then, does the "unsatisfactory" element come in? Shall we listen once more to this modern Christian prophet?

> "Now it is a hard saying, but a wholesome one, that the great majority of"—professedly Christian—"mankind have for centuries done everything with the moral rule of the Gospel except obey it. They have read it aloud in their churches and their homes; they have enshrined it in a magnificent system of worship; they have glossed and commented it, till it bears a suspicious resemblance to the code which they find most profitable and convenient; they have shaped and trimmed it to fit into a corner of an otherwise pagan existence."[1]

If this witness is true, no other explanation is necessary for the "apparent failure of Christianity as a general rule of life and conduct".[2] Its *raison d'être* is gone. It is in this world to save men, and the men who accept it are not saved. There is no need of further appeal. Questions of criticism and ceremonial are so secondary as to be irrelevant. If in the realm of bodily health a new system of therapeutics were loudly lauded as being superior to all other, and yet those who adopted it were no more preserved from illness, no more surely or quickly cured of disease than those who rejected it, there would be no need of a Royal Commission to examine its claims. Common sense would suffice. It does also suffice for the

[1] "Bampton Lectures," 1907, by J. H. F. Peile, p. 21.

[2] The full title of the Bampton Lectures referred to is "The Reproach of the Gospel—an Inquiry into the Apparent Failure of Christianity as a General Rule of Life and Conduct, with Special Reference to the Present Time".

modern critic of religion, who is quite within his rights when he asks that those who accept a faith which has "salvation" for its very pith and marrow, should show by unmistakable signs what it is to be "saved".

It being undeniable that vast numbers associated with Christian Churches do not manifest any tokens of being really "saved," no inquiry can be more appropriate than to ask once more, why not? Is the apparent Christian failure due to perversity, or to misunderstanding? Is the non-attractiveness of the Christian ideal to outsiders, a natural result of their superior intelligence and moral perception? Or have they too failed to do justice to something which merited both their appreciation and allegiance? We may leave these questions unanswered and yet acknowledge the plain fact that with all the preaching, and teaching, and singing, and praying, which constitute the staple methods of the churches, there is yet a lamentable confusion in the popular mind as to what it is all about. The majority of our fellow-countrymen are not only outside the churches, but increasingly content to remain there. For the indifference which this attitude betokens, there must be some cause, or causes. The lamentable certainty is that they do not see any necessity for the "salvation" of which Christianity so insistently speaks. Whereupon the question must arise, is it truly and fairly put before them? It is evidently impossible to answer this in the affirmative, so long as there are such conflicting voices issuing from the various folds into which the Christian flock is divided. The world of ordinary men and women will never be impressed with the advantage, let alone necessity, of "salvation," by a multitude of discordant shibboleths proceeding from as many differing sects.

Yet the resulting confusion cannot be laid to the charge of Christ, or His Apostles. The mistakes

which permit Christian dissension and misrepresentations thus to alienate the people, arise doubtless from the various ways of interpreting the New Testament. So much must be granted in favour of the Romish plea for an infallible interpreter, even when the authority of our Christian Scriptures is acknowledged as final. But of all branches of the universal Church, Rome should be the last to assume infallibility. A moment's glance at its history compels us to dismiss such a claim, as peremptorily as charitably, for evermore. There is but one human way of arriving at the truth, viz. patient persistence in seeking it, with never-failing readiness to acknowledge errors when they are shown to be such, and endeavour to make further progress by correcting them. That is exactly what is required of the Christian Churches of this day, in not a few respects; and one may say, with little hesitation, most of all as regards the question before us. It is useless to lay stress upon names, or creeds, or organizations. Whether men who profess Christianity are Anglicans or Romanists, whether they belong to the High Church, or Low Church, or Free Church section of Christendom, is a small matter. They are all alike pledged to offer mankind some sort of "salvation". They are bound to assert that men need to be "saved". In days of ever-growing liberty and intelligence, the immediate response to such appeals cannot but be a double inquiry. The men of the world want to know from the Christian Church with increasing insistence—first, what it really is to be saved; and then, whether those who so strongly affirm its necessity do themselves embody its actuality. These are the main questions upon which the future of Christianity turns, and must turn, amongst millions of men who have neither the time nor the disposition to be critics or pietists.

The latter and practical half of this pressing double question we may well postpone. It is by far the more difficult of the two queries, despite the fact that so many think themselves qualified to pass sweeping judgments. Wholesale condemnations, whether of churches or individuals, on the ground of inconsistency, are as a rule as unwarranted as severe. As estimates of true or false salvation, they are worth about as much as an opinion concerning the characters of the inmates of a house, from the size and shape and colour of its doors and windows. It is true that only by means of social or external relationships can we form any estimate at all concerning a man's personal character. But there is an inner world as well as an outer for every moral being, and this has certainly to come into the account. Hence He who at one time pointed out that a "tree may be known by its fruits," at another said with equal emphasis "judge not, that ye be not judged".

It must suffice here to attempt once more to appreciate and state in language which may be "understanded of the people," the essential truths which are condensed into the word "salvation". In spite of all the utterances, wise and foolish, true and false, which have been and yet are put before men on this theme, its unmeasured importance from every point of view is manifest enough to justify any endeavour to clear away confusion and correct mistake, for the benefit of both Church and world.

For the great assumptions which underlie all serious thought about the Christian ideal of salvation, no apology need here be made. It were unreasonable, even if space permitted, to demand proof of everything on one occasion. Some accepted axioms must precede all reasoning. Nothing can be said about salvation in the Christian sense without postulating the being of God, the moral nature

of man, the reality of sin, and the personal work of Jesus Christ. Elsewhere, these are legitimate subjects for discussion. But the New Testament terms which are so significant and illuminating for our present purpose, take all these for granted, as we also must do now. In such procedure, however, it may be well to affirm that there is no need for apology. There is nothing in our modern knowledge to forbid our making these assumptions. The Christian ideal, whatever it is, is not a castle in the air. Rather it is rock-based on fact and philosophy in fivefold fashion.

1. It recognizes God as half revealed and half concealed in nature, but further and fully revealed, so far as our powers of apprehension go, in Jesus Christ. From Him comes the great foundation truth that God is not only the Creator but the Father of all men. This involves, of course, not only the reality of the Divine personality, in the completest significance of that term, but also such loftiness of character as exceeds all our best conceptions of fatherhood and motherhood combined. That some modern thinkers, both able and sincere, cannot accept this view, need not be ignored; but the whole case, as up to the present time, has been sufficiently set forth elsewhere to permit its rational assumption here.[1]

2. Again as to human nature. In spite of the verdict of our own consciousness which nothing can gainsay, the trend of much philosophical thought is in the direction of the theory which falsely calls itself "Determinism".[2] What such a conception

[1] For fuller statement I must be content to refer to my other volumes "Theomonism True," and "The True God," in which the whole modern situation is fairly faced.

[2] For full justification of this statement see my volume "Determinism—False and True". (C. Kelly.)

logically leads to has been only too clearly expressed in the words of its popular and academic advocates.[1]

Here, again, without entering into the well-known controversy, we may adopt the summary of one of our ablest scientists. Says Sir Oliver Lodge :—

> "The modern superstition about the universe is that being suffused with law and order it contains nothing personal, nothing indeterminate, nothing unforeseen ; that there is no room for the free activity of intelligent beings, that everything is mechanically determined ; so that given the velocity and acceleration and position of every atom at any instant, the whole future could be unravelled by sufficient mathematical power. Why not assume, what is manifestly the truth, that free will exists, and has to be reckoned with ; that the universe is not a machine subject to outside forces but a living organism with initiations of its own ; and that the laws which govern it, though they include mechanical and physical and chemical laws, are not limited to these, but involve other and higher laws, abstractions which may some day be formulated perhaps for life, and mind, and spirit."[2]

3. From such an attitude, and from it alone, follows

[1] For the former, fair specimens are Mr. Blatchford's published assertions that "The actions of a man's will are as mathematically fixed at his birth, as are the motions of a planet in its orbit. . . . No man can under any circumstances be justly blamed for anything he may say or do. No man is answerable for his own acts," etc. For the latter, the words of Prof. Hamon, of the New University of Brussels—"We ought no more to consider a man who acts responsible, for he is as much an automaton as a tiger or a rock. General irresponsibility, such is scientific truth ! " Whilst Prof. McTaggart, speaking from his Cambridge chair, says "Determinists maintain that our volitions are as completely determined as all other events ".

[2] "Hibbert Journal," July, 1911, p. 704.

the reality, and indeed the very possibility, of sin, as Christianly assumed.[1] It is quite irrelevant to rail against the word "sin". Whatever standard be adopted, wrong-doing or moral evil involves free action, that is real choice, real volition, which is the ever-present condition of sin. Whence it follows that sin, to be sin, is never merely negative, but always in some degree positive. In the Christian view, it is essentially the violation of one or both of the two great commands as formulated by Jesus Christ.

4. Such reality and positiveness of sin, or moral wrong, cannot be without consequence. As displayed in physical fact, it is the cause of seven-tenths of the misery of mankind. The tragic list of possible moral evils specified by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians,[2] is only too true in actuality and fearful in result. To banish these all from the practice of humanity, would be to turn this world of suffering and sorrow almost into Paradise. But when the higher nature of man is taken into account, the physical consequence of sin is less serious than the moral and spiritual. In the degree in which the Fatherhood of God is real, sin becomes a treble injury. First, to the Father's heart; secondly, to the Father's law, which is no less law for being love; thirdly, to the child who thus alienates himself from the source of his being and his highest possibility of good. The strong terms employed throughout the Bible to convey the direful consequences of sin, such as "death," "ruin," "loss," "destruction," etc., become in the light of history, observation, and experience, none too strong, to express what has followed,

[1] The popular statement, as in Mr. Blatchford's book "God and My Neighbour," is, "Man being only what God made him, and having only the powers God gave him, *could* not sin against God, any more than a steam engine can sin against the engineer who designed and built it". (Italics his.)

[2] v. 19.

does follow, and must follow, when by the myriad and through succeeding generations, men repeat the sin of David, or Esau or Cain in the Old Testament, or scorn the two great commands of Jesus in the New. Those who deny the Christian doctrine of sin, have still on their hands the whole actuality of human misery-producing wrong to explain. Both the facts and their issues remain in all their gruesome enormity.

5. It goes without saying that the Christian ideal of salvation assumes the historicity and unique personality of Jesus Christ, with all that is involved in His doctrine, works, character, death, and resurrection. How far the variations of opinion concerning Him affect the meaning of being saved through Him, we may proceed to inquire. But this remains unshaken and unequivocal, that Jesus, the real man, the prophet of Galilee, the teacher and healer who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and believed to have risen from the dead, is the final source of all that Christianity understands by "salvation". The New Testament summary is succinctly expressed for ever in Peter's words—"And in none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven that is given amongst men, wherein we must be saved". It cannot, of course, be denied or forgotten that in our time, even more than during the theological conflicts of the first four Christian centuries, there is unrest and uncertainty concerning the nature of Christ's personality. But if we rule out as unworthy of regard the vapourings of doubt as to his historicity, we have left still the unshakable Christian dogma that, in some sense or other, "salvation" consists in the knowledge and discipleship of Jesus Christ.

6. There is yet one more assumption which cannot be omitted. Whether we know much or little

concerning what awaits us when our mortal strength is spent, it is an absolute Christian axiom that death does not end all. There is a hereafter which comes just as really as the present into the purview of "salvation". If, in accordance with the modern mood, we insist that the Kingdom of Heaven, which is Christ's own synonym for being saved, may be and must be in some measure realized here and now, there must be no hesitation whatever in adding—so long as the New Testament is deemed worthy of regard — that Christian salvation contemplates measurelessly more than this present state of being. It credits man with immortality, no less plainly than with moral responsibility.

These assumptions are confessedly vast, but they are indispensable. Questions relating to them must be settled elsewhere. Only with these in hand can we proceed with any attempt to set forth clearly what the Christian Church has to offer the modern world in its reiterated appeal to men to come and be saved.

Unfortunately, every such attempt must begin with negations. So many and so different are the interpretations of "salvation" which emanate from the various divisions of Christendom claiming authority to teach, that the average man may well be forgiven both bewilderment and hesitation. For it is a manifest certainty that they cannot all be true. Of two direct contradictories, one must be wrong. Here, therefore, is where teacher and learner must divide between them the responsibility for decision. No Church can rationally claim infallibility. No man can reasonably ask for it. The only Apostolical Succession worthy of regard on New Testament lines—or indeed contemplated by its writers—is that which obeys the exhortation of Paul and of John, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good". —"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the

spirits whether they be of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world".

Many professing Christians whose sincerity and intelligence must not be called in question, will not endorse the negatives following which we feel compelled to posit. For such attitude they take their own responsibility, even as we do for stating them. The final appeal, as above reiterated, must be to the words of Christ and His Apostles which have come down to us in our Christian Scriptures. With their authority we cannot but define and formulate the following denials, in order to clear the way for valid assertions.

(1) The popular notion of being "saved" has been all too long and yet is only too commonly that of "going to heaven". This has been unwisely fostered by numberless hymns, especially where it ought to have been least emphasized, viz. amongst young people and children, or the poor and ignorant. But according to Jesus Himself these are just those to whom most of all salvation should be represented as present deliverance, and all the future after death regarded as the consequence, not the essence, of being saved here and now. "Good tidings to the poor; release to the captives; recovery of sight to the blind; liberty for the oppressed; the acceptable year of the Lord"; these were the unmistakable items concerning which Jesus said to His hearers at Nazareth, "To-day hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears".[1]

(2) Salvation, as Jesus and His Apostles contemplated it, has neither need nor room for priesthood in any form, and is not dependent upon any sacrament, under any kind of administration whatever. Apostles, evangelists, pastors, teachers, elders, deacons, all are acknowledged as Gospel witnesses

[1] Luke IV. 16-22.

and helpers, but no priests are called for. The very word for "priest" is never once found in the New Testament, in any Christian connexion. The authority and sanctity of the two sacraments is always auxiliary, never essential. No man is ever represented as being saved by sacrament, but only helped in the process of his salvation.

(3) Again, being saved is never to be confounded with the holding of an accurate creed. As a matter of fact, no creed ever has been or is wholly accurate. All creeds and all theologies are but human attempts to formulate truth. No number of "divines" assembled in any Council or Conference, can ever confer infallibility, or even accuracy, on their decrees. The history of the great early Christian Councils is anything but assuring. Their results were no more faultless or final than their temper was worthy. The far-reaching consequences of the Council of Trent are not one whit more true for being potent. To-day, "orthodox" Churches have no more warrant for their orthodoxy than a certain amount of agreement between men whose sincerity and ability is no guarantee whatever against mistake. So it comes to pass that all creeds without exception have been and are being modified. But the salvation which the New Testament contemplates, is independent of such accuracy. A Romanist, an Anglican, a Unitarian, a Methodist, a Baptist, a Swedenborgian, may all know it; even though such knowledge may differ in fullness and potency.

(4) Whence also it follows that being saved does not consist in formal attachment to any Church. There are probably still some few left who are found to say that outside the community to which they belong, there is little or no hope hereafter for any others. But they are no longer taken seriously, and need not be considered. When, indeed, educated

men like Lord Halifax and some others, quote Jesus as saying that "there shall be one fold and one shepherd," they are false preachers without excuse. Not only because they know that the version of 1611 is wrong as to the meaning of the Greek word *ποίμνη*, and the Revised Version is right in its correction; but because the very same verse which they misquote distinctly affirms that to the mind of Christ there were "other sheep," in other folds, which were dear to Him and part of His one flock. It would be difficult to find a notion more flagrantly contradictory to Christian salvation than the bigotry with which, alas! in past and present alike, some sections of the Christian Church have contemned and anathematized other sections.

(5) One delusion concerning salvation which for a long long time held vast numbers in its miserable clutch, has happily so far disappeared as to need no more than mere mention. The supposition of an "eternal decree" on the part of God, whereby some were "elected to be saved," and the rest "doomed to be damned," was from its inception to its dismissal little less than infernal. The fact that it arose from a sincere desire to maintain the Divine sovereignty, did nothing to lessen the horribleness of the cruel injustice which it attributed to Him whom Jesus unequivocally declared to be the Father of all men. "Predestination" did as gross wrong to the Scriptures it professed to interpret, as to the character of God in the eyes of humanity. From such a theological monstrosity the nineteenth century has set men free for evermore. Predestination and salvation are incommensurable.

(6) Coming nearer to the thought of our own day, we find another double confusion rife. Salvation is taken to be the same as conversion; and conversion is identified with reversion. Both these errors are

as costly as misleading. The latter especially. The parable of "the prodigal son" has in some respects been greatly over-preached, and the character of the elder brother so misrepresented in numberless sermons, that the prevalent impression has been one of admiration, if not emulation, towards the one who disgraced and degraded himself, whilst scorn and contumely have been poured upon the son who was faithful to his father and his duty. So have young people been almost led to believe that to be really right they must first go sadly wrong. The words of Jesus to Nicodemus, again, have not seldom been so twisted into meanings which He never intended, that the general inference has obtained, as an evangelical doctrine, that in order to be in the Christian sense "saved," there must be some great change, some catastrophic revulsion like that which brought the wanderer back to his father, or transformed Saul the persecutor into Paul the Apostle.

But all such inferences are quite unwarranted. Such cases as that of Timothy—"my beloved child"—who was brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and never wandered away at all, but maintained the "unfeigned faith" that was in his mother and grandmother, are entirely overlooked. As is also the Apostle Paul's distinct assertion that the children of believers are "holy,"[1] or as Dr. Weymouth renders it—"in reality have a place among God's people". In all such cases, "conversion"—if the term must be preserved at all, though there is no reason why it should, the use of it in the older version is quite misleading—means not reversion, but realization. And by how much prevention is better than cure, and a window that has been preserved entire better than one which has been broken and then mended, by so much is that awakening of

[1] 1 Cor. VII. 14.

the soul which most deserves to be called "the new birth," better than the remorseful turning back of any prodigal, or the piecing together of any fragments of human "broken earthenware".

(7) If the Episcopal Churches have erred in representing salvation as being something done *ab extra* by sacerdotal authority in sacraments, the Free Churches have not done much better in the almost universal stress which they have laid on suddenness as a necessary element in salvation. Nothing is more common in evangelical communities than to hear that so many were "saved" on such an occasion; and to the same effect are multiplied testimonies from numberless sincere individuals during every special "mission". Strictly, or rather carefully, speaking, they are never true. No man ever was, is, or will be, in the Christian sense "saved" at any one moment. For Christian salvation is not an act but a process. It is not a birth but a life. It is not a special creation but an evolution. There may, on the occasions specified, be many sincere and valid beginnings, when through personal trust a penitent may enter into heart-communion with the Father. But that no more constitutes salvation, than a boy's entry into a good school constitutes education. The new birth, whether by realization or reversion, may truly take place at a given moment in a human soul, but as life involves a great deal more than being born, so does salvation mean much more than a new beginning through penitence and faith. Conversion, however genuine, is by far the lesser not the greater part of salvation.

There are more reasons than ever as the world grows older and civilization becomes more complex and artificial, why all emphasis should be laid on the unmistakable truth that salvation is a character process and not an emotional convulsion, an attitude and

not an act. It were well worth while to urge the reading of the Revised Version, both in public and in private, if only for the sake of the one phrase, "being saved," which it rightly introduces at the end of the second chapter of the Acts, and the beginning of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.[1] It is no longer necessary to protest against the Calvinistic doctrine of "once in grace always in grace". The thought of salvation as some kind of magical change wrought at once and for ever at a given moment, has happily been dismissed with other well-intended mistakes. But it is necessary to say very plainly indeed that there is no one stereotyped way of salvation, any more than there is one exact contour of a human face. Human constitutions, circumstances, and characters, differ as greatly as men's faces; and the experience of salvation, as the late Dr. Maclaren once wisely said, is like water poured into a vessel, it takes the shape of that vessel, whatever it may be. It may begin with a shock of revulsion, if preceded by definite depravity. Or it may come to pass as gently and as surely as the young shoot becomes a sapling, and the sapling grows into a tree.

(8) Last, but not least, is it necessary to make unmistakably plain that to be saved in the truly Christian sense, is not, as one would think from many Gospel exhortations, to "become a child of God". For that would imply that the unsaved are not children of God; which would flatly contradict the most definite teaching both of Christ Himself and of the Apostles. When an accredited and popular preacher of the Gospel is publicly reported, in these days, as having printed that—"I do not know of a more damnable doctrine than that which is so popular in some great pulpits of the land to-day, known as the

[1] Acts II. 47; I Cor. I. 18.

Fatherhood of God"[1]—it becomes necessary to say with the utmost possible plainness and emphasis, that this "damnable" doctrine is most certainly that of the whole New Testament. Nothing can possibly be more clear than Christ's representation of God as Father of all men, utterly irrespective, as He Himself declared,[2] of their status or character. All the picked passages to the seeming contrary which have been too often alleged, admit of, nay call for, a true and sufficient explanation on exactly the same principles as are applied to the great saying of Paul to Timothy that "God is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe". So, according to the Gospel of Jesus, is God the Father of all men, and the special sense in which His Fatherhood applies to them that believe, consists in their recognition, appreciation, and reciprocation of that relationship. The call of the Church, therefore, to all men to "come to Jesus" and be "saved," is not a call to become the children of God, for they are all that already, whether obedient or disobedient. It is rather the reminder of their true nature and dignity, with all the consequences of duty, opportunity, responsibility, and sin, that flow from it. Apart from this special human relationship, unmistakably set forth in the opening poetry of Genesis, there could be no thought of sin. Without this, men would be but two-footed animals; and mere animals cannot sin. They are not made as men are, "after the Divine image"; they are not great enough to be the children of God. Sin is the Esau-like scorn of His light and love.

Having thus briefly, but it is hoped plainly, set aside the possible and popular misconceptions which

[1] In the "Christian World" newspaper, from a volume by Dr. Len Broughton.

[2] Matt. v. 43-8.

have more or less obscured the true Gospel intention of salvation, the way is open to attempt at least a summary of those positive elements in this great Christian ideal, which constitute its unspeakable significance, as veritable "good tidings," for all nations no less than for every man.

(1) The first unmistakable feature of Christian salvation is that in any and every form it is the reception of something—a boon, a love-token, a benediction, a revelation—from the true and only God of all. As a mere concatenation of religious words, this, of course, amounts to little or nothing. But when rational and reverent thought makes as awful as real the being of God, then the assurance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that—

> "This awful God is ours
> Our Father and our Friend"

becomes glad tidings beyond expression. Then, the very familiar words—"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life"—throw a still more penetrating, solemn and tender light upon the meaning of salvation. If men were all they should be, and might be, the assurance of the Divine Fatherhood would be unmitigated bliss. But the allegory of Genesis is fearfully true. As Adam sought to hide himself under a sense of guilt, so does the sense of sin make the holy Fatherhood of God a source of fear and aversion, rather than joyful expectation. Such a sense of sin is a general human fact—though manifested in many different ways—and is only too really warranted. Where it is least acknowledged, there is most reason to feel it. Civilized spiritual inertia may be quite as unworthy as criminal offence. Even as in any real home the father's or mother's heart would be as truly grieved by one child's selfish sulking, as by another child's

wilful disobedience. Indeed there can be no greater sin against love than to ignore it. But Christ's assurance is that the Father's love is love in spite of ill, in any degree. The "mystery of the Gospel" is that human sin has become the occasion of the greatest conceivable expression of that love. Jesus is for all men the pledge of a Divine welcome which promises not only forgiveness to all men, but communion. Until that pledge is dishonoured; until the being of God is disproved; until His Fatherhood is shown to be but pious fiction; no conceivable benediction could be so great as that which invites men, for sheer love's sake, into conscious, ennobling fellowship with the Most High.

(2) But every gift requires a receiver, and reception is an act of choice. The receiver must exercise volition no less than the giver. Hence into the truth concerning Christian salvation, there must enter the element of human responsibility and free agency. No marionette, no automaton, can in any Gospel sense be "saved". In the very nature of things God can no more save men without themselves, than they can save themselves without Him. Repentance and trust, love and obedience, are moral qualities which God cannot make for men, or put in them if He would; and for their own sake would not if He could. For this human exercise of will is an absolutely essential part of being saved, in any Christian sense. The phrase "salvation by faith," has come greatly into use since Reformation times. But it is only possible in a very modified sense. As an antithesis to Jewish legalism, or Romish sacerdotalism, it may still bear good significance. But the words of Paul usually quoted in this connexion, do not bear the stress laid upon them. They really refer only to the beginning, not to the full-orbed experience of salvation.

It may be contrary to Protestant and evangelical tradition to speak of "salvation by works," but it is, as a summarized ideal, much more in accord with the purport of the whole Gospel than "salvation by faith". For it is doubly true. So far as penitent trust is concerned, Jesus said definitely, in answer to the inquiry—"What must we do to work the works of God?"—"This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent". But it is after that personal effort and decision, that there comes the greater part of "being saved," even all that Jesus Himself included in His strong words, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord—but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven". The same truth is conveyed in His tender exhortation on the eve of his final trial, recorded for us in the fifteenth chapter of John. All that is there included is as truly the greater part of salvation, as the growth from babyhood to maturity is greater than simply being born. For salvation, to be real, must always involve co-operation of the Divine with the human; and this co-operation can never be better expressed than in Paul's well-known words to the Corinthians:—"Working together with Him, we intreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain".

(3) The result of such definite and conscious reception, cannot but be an altered attitude of mind and heart both towards God and man. As sin involves not merely the absence of good but the presence of positive ill, in actual volition, so does salvation signify not merely the being saved from something, but to something. The usual expression of this in religious parlance, is from sin to holiness, or from the guilt and power of sin. But it seems to need simplifying and putting into homelier speech, if it is to be invested with reality.

(i) As to God, the result is that obedience to the first great command becomes not only possible, but equally actual and blessed. The change here is from alienation to communion, from fear to love. The Fatherhood of God becomes no longer a doctrine, but an experience; not a mere religious dogma, but a real stay for the mind and comfort for the heart. The thought of God, so far from being one of dread or fear, becomes one of such ceaseless inspiration as is most forcefully conveyed in the Psalmist's language—"All my springs are in Thee".

(ii) As to man, and the second great command, that too comes to be much less a law than an opportunity; no longer a mere duty but a joy. Salvation becomes the synonym for the diminution and subjugation of the selfishness which clings to human nature from its brute ancestry. Whence a genuine brotherhood emerges, which, if universally realized, would turn all earth's Armageddons into Paradise, and render our modern Dreadnoughts and Super-Dreadnoughts as unnecessary as revolvers at a Christmas party. Equally on the small scale of an individual heart, or a single home, and the large scale of international relationships, it would mean the passing from the dark and dreadful list of actualities condensed in Paul's "works of the flesh"[1] into the gracious and noble possibilities of the "fruit of the spirit".[2] Whether an incarnation of such a Psalm of love as he addressed to the Corinthians,[3] or his ideal of Christian discipleship written to the Romans,[4] would not bring more deep and lasting good to humanity than the brute superiority of Nietzsche's philosophy, or the doctrine that heroism is found only on the battle-field, ought not, one

[1] Gal. v. 19. [2] Gal. v. 22.
[3] 1 Cor. XIII. [4] Rom. XII.

would think, to be a matter of doubt; unless we are all to revert to the non-moral animalism of the jungle.

(iii) Especially is it manifest that in all its social implications, salvation was never so much needed as to-day. For, as Mr. Peile has well said—"If we could learn and teach these two lessons of the Fatherhood of God, to care for others, and put away over-care for ourselves; a good many of our economic problems would be solved by ceasing to exist".[1] And even so severe a critic of the Christian Churches as the editor of the "Clarion" says that—

> "Altruism, which is the embodiment of the command, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself,' seems to have originated in the teachings of Christ"; and "is at any rate in this country fast becoming the most powerful impulse in social evolution. Altruism, indeed, is more important than Socialism itself. Given universal love of man for man, and we should have something better than Socialism itself."[2]

Such special salvation on the large scale is, we know, regarded by many as impracticable—a mere counsel of perfection. But the only truth in such despair is that the large result must ever develop from small beginnings. If each man were, in Christ's sense, "saved," sociology would take care of itself. This is sufficiently corroborated by the writer just quoted when, referring to his fear of a German invasion, he exclaims—"If only we were all Socialists, or all Christians; but we are not". All genuine altruism must begin with holy egoism; even as the second command itself begins at the end. Such worthy self-appreciation finds its most real warrant

[1] "Bampton Lectures," 1907, p. 97.
[2] "Altruism," by R. Blatchford, pp. 3, 6.

and fullest scope in recognition and reciprocation of the Divine Fatherhood learned of Jesus Christ. Thence it develops into the limitless and practical brotherhood which He both enforced and illustrated.

(4) The true though succinct summary, then, of all the foregoing, is that salvation is character. In fuller statement, it is the development of Christian character. "Being saved" signifies the process of that development, through the grace of God working in co-operation with the human will, by means of life's practical discipline. Its three distinctive marks, as Christian character—distinguished from ordinary or moral character—are its excess, its extent, its method of maintenance. Each of these is a large theme which one despairs of putting into a few sentences. Here, scarcely more can be said than that they are all absolutely essential to Christian reality.

(i) As to its excess, probably the greatest practical error in Christendom to-day is the comfortable convention that ordinary good character is Christian. Yet the doctrine of Jesus is quite unmistakably to the contrary. "Unless your goodness *exceeds* that of the Scribes and Pharisees"—who were the religiously good people of their day, not by any means all hypocrites—"you will certainly not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." The last three words constitute a true synonym for salvation. But it is conditioned by the searching question which followed. "If you love those who love you, do not even the tax-gatherers the same? If you are kind and courteous to your brothers only, what extra do you do?"[1] It is the *excess* of goodness in the Christian character which alone constitutes it Christian. As Prof. Seeley truly put it: "This higher-toned good-

[1] Matt. v. 47: τί περισσὸν ποιεῖτε,

ness which we call holiness". The Church as well as the world shrinks from the latter word, but without it—as expressing the betterness of Christian character beyond all other—there is no real salvation, and no valid Christianity.[1]

(ii) It is and may well be only too true that men in general are rather repelled than attracted by both words, "salvation" and "holiness," by reason of the cartoons, if not monstrosities, which have been presented to the world too often in their name. Even to this hour they are associated with a pious subjectivity which is as narrow, if not as repulsive, as the traits of character described by Prof. Seeley, in the paragraph preceding that whence his above-quoted phrase is taken.[2] Modern writers who are unfriendly to Christianity sometimes vie with one another in pouring scorn on the impracticability[3]

[1] When Prof. J. E. McTaggart, in an address before the "Heretics" Society at Cambridge, says: "The men who believe, for example, in God, or immortality, or optimism, seem to be neither better nor worse morally than those who disbelieve in them," such a deliverance only obtains regard from the position of the speaker. The intended inference is that men's "zeal for virtue does not vary according to their views on religious matters". It is but another instance of the "lie which is half a truth," which is, as Tennyson says, "a harder matter to fight". Whatever becomes of men's "views," nothing in history, or observation, or experience, is surer than that their religious convictions do most markedly affect their zeal for virtue. The judgement that they are neither better nor worse, is based indeed upon what "seems" much more than upon what is. Even the seeming, however, points to a real degree of Christian failure from Christ's ideal: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see". But though this failure may be true of the average, there are myriads of individual examples to the contrary; as is fully acknowledged by Prof. Seeley in the last paragraph of his remarkable chapter on the Enthusiasm of Humanity ("Ecce Homo," cheap ed. p. 59).

[2] Cf. "Ecce Homo," cheap ed. p. 58.

[3] Thus Mr. Blatchford, in his anti-Christian polemic, writes—"Holiness! for shame, the word is obnoxious. It has stood so long for craven fear, for exotistical [sic] inebriation, for selfish retirement from the trials and buffets and dirty work of the world." Which is

of true holiness. But the New Testament is so utterly unmistakable in regard to its all-practical and all-comprehensive nature, that they are altogether without excuse. Quotation is quite unnecessary. From beginning to end of Gospels and Epistles alike, the representation of Christian character, as embodying salvation, is that it must be practical just in the degree that it is spiritual. When due allowance is made for the differing circumstances of the first and the twentieth centuries, it is equally clear that in these days the practical becomes the social. The Kingdom of Heaven on which Jesus insisted, can never stand for less than the greatest blessing of the greatest number, with all this life's possibilities of good and without respect of persons. That is how salvation, consistently developed on its own lines, according to the present day environment, leads on naturally and necessarily to Christian Socialism.

(5) Thus, last but by no means least, there emerges the final and future significance of being saved. It cannot be denied that in the days that are gone, Christian teachers without number have ignored the making of Heaven here, in their strong desire to emphasize the Heaven hereafter. They were undoubtedly wrong, and Christendom is doing well to unlearn their doctrine. But there is no small danger, thanks to the perversity of human nature, that one extreme should be adopted instead of another. In pleading, however rightly, that spiritual salvation must mean also social regeneration, the solid reality and transcendent greatness of the promise concerning the hereafter can never be overlooked, and ought never to be underrated.

This much we know, that death is certain, and

just as false a representation as to say that the Socialism which he advocates stands for free love, tyranny, and anarchy.

apart from the assurance of Jesus, all is dark, uncertain, and nebulous. It is indeed exceedingly interesting, to say no more, when a modern man of science as eminent as Sir Oliver Lodge does not shrink from printing the following :—

> "How are we to get evidence in favour of such an apparently gratuitous hypothesis, as the existence of myriads on the other side? Well, speaking for myself, and with full and cautious responsibility, I have to state that as an outcome of my investigations into psychical matters, I have at length, and quite gradually, become convinced, after more than twenty years of study, not only that persistent individual existence is a fact, but that occasional communication across the chasm — with difficulty and under definite conditions—is possible." [1]

But when this, and all else of the same kind of testimony, is taken at its best and utmost, what is it? Just a crumb of comfort for those who shrink from annihilation. Better than Haeckel's hopeless "thanatism," certainly; but scarcely more than that.[2] There is no approach to the tender simplicity yet immeasurable comfort of Christ's assurance :—"Let

[1] "Hibbert Journal," July, 1911, p. 709.

[2] Unless we also adopt the further suggestions of the same authority: "Let us learn by the testimony of experience—either our own or that of others—that those who have been still are; that they care for us and help us; that they too are progressing and learning and working and hoping; that there are grades of existence, stretching upward and upward to all eternity; and that God Himself, through His agents and messengers is continually striving and working and planning so as to bring this creation of His through its preparatory labor and pain, and lead it on to an existence higher and better than anything we have ever known" (loc. cit., p. 716). But this is evidently only the scientific imagination applied to Christian data. Psychical science, *per se*, holds out no such roseate prospect.

not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid". "In my Father's house"—i.e. of course, in modern speech, in the whole universe of God—"there are many stages of rest and progress." What will become of the unsaved, need not here concern us. For those who are being saved, such a hope as this involves is at once sufficient and reliable. The method of such a non-material existence need not trouble any one. For every line of this page that is thoughtfully read, includes a mystery quite as utterly beyond science as any resurrection body. What we are sure of now, in spite of all our ignorances, is that 'salvation,' in the Christian sense, means peace and gladness, nobility and philanthropy, in ever-developing character. Such character requires personality for its realization. The promise of the Gospel concerning Heaven—which admits of being turned into warning against a correspondingly real Hell—is that such potent personality as now characterizes each of us, shall not crumble into nothing at the touch of death, but shall continue to develop, helped much rather than hindered by the great change. As it is character which after all constitutes earth's most real heaven, so the salvation which has its essence in Christian character promises not only the non-destruction but the enlargement of that heaven, together with the assurance of its endless continuity. It is true that we cannot grasp the endlessness, but we can appreciate the continuity, and that for the present is enough.

In a final word, therefore, to be saved, according to the Christian ideal, is to find in the love of God, as incarnate in Jesus Christ, sufficient ground for that conviction of sin which is the hall-mark of our moral nature; relief, through His forgiveness, from the sting of conscience; power to overcome moral evil, and prove the privilege of closest communion

with the highest and holiest. Such salvation, because it means transformation and ennoblement of character in the individual, in being true to itself, cannot but spread throughout the whole special environment. Such regeneration by means of character, is the only hope of the future for human society, whatever social or economic schemes be adopted.[1] Thus the "being saved," on Christian principles, would turn human life into an unmeasured benediction for all, without respect of persons. This ought to constitute sufficient justification before all men here and now. But besides that, it becomes also the pledge of the worth and reliability of a hope beyond the grave, such as normal human nature craves. Undoubtedly Tennyson was right that—

> Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
> No life that breathes with human breath
> Has ever truly longed for death.
>
> 'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
> Oh life, not death, for which we pant:
> More life, and fuller, that I want.

Such yearning becomes intense, just in proportion as this present existence has been made sweet and precious and noble by personal devotion to the highest. It is to this worthiest human longing that Christian salvation more utterly responds, than any other dream or scheme. When, therefore, all that

[1] Thus Mr. J. Ramsay Macdonald, speaking as a Socialist, in addressing a gathering of men, speaks as plainly as truly: "I say here as one who is in politics, as one who has felt the difficulty of deciding what is the right course to adopt in affairs of government—I candidly confess to you that I can see no hope for the people, for the future, unless we can appeal to the character of the people, unless first of all character is established like a bulwark in our midst. It alone is the refuge and protection of those of us who have to stand for Democracy and fight its uphill fights—often with some who should be our followers lagging behind" (Address at the Men's Meeting, Leysian Mission, London).

it stands for day by day is also taken into fair and full account, the very least that can be said of so great salvation is that it is "worthy of all acceptation". When genuinely accepted and truly acted on, it brings, indeed, such "glad tidings of great joy for all people," as ought to be received with gratitude and enthusiasm by every rational being.

HOW DOES THE BIBLE STAND TO-DAY?

"This much is certain, that there are two highly strategic exercises of the Church to which the ordinary man who goes to church pays practically no attention. One is the public reading of the Scriptures, and the other is the public prayer of the minister. Let us drop fictions in a matter of such tremendous importance, and face facts. The fact is that virtually none listens. Let the accent of genuine conviction fall on men's ears and they are bound to listen. They cannot help being arrested, because the simple fact is that the heart of man is eternally hungry."

—W. F. Osborne, "The Faith of a Layman".

"Seeing thus the remarkable place which the Bible occupies in modern life, the highest significance at once attaches to the fact that the general view of the Bible hitherto prevailing is undergoing a great change in these days. Light from various quarters has been thrown upon its pages, researches in the ancient lands connected with its origin have been made, and studies in the historic circumstances attending its production and transmission have been patiently prosecuted; all contributing to render the Bible a much richer book for us than it could possibly have been for our forefathers. But it is also a different book, in the sense of bearing a different nature."

—Dr. W. C. Selleck, "The New Appreciation of the Bible".

"This dogma of Biblical infallibility is perhaps the supreme illustration of the power of the mind to believe not only in the absence but in direct defiance of all evidence. It claims for the Bible what the Bible nowhere claims for itself; and it has furnished scepticism with its most damaging weapons against religion.

"It is this idolatry of the letter which led so great a man as Wesley to endorse the direction of Exodus xxii. 18—'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live'—with the remark 'I would have no compassion on these witches—I would burn them all. The giving up of witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible.'"—Dr. J. Warschauer, "What is the Bible?"

"This lower conception of the work of the inspiring Spirit, this supposition of a dictated book, every statement of which must needs be historically and scientifically accurate, has gradually fastened itself on the minds of Englishmen since the middle of the seventeenth century, notwithstanding the silent protest of the Church of England and the open protest of such spiritual reformers as the early Quakers. It is this conception which, as knowledge has increased, has produced so grave a perplexity that many men have closed the Old Testament altogether; and to vast multitudes, unless some help is offered them, it will presently become a sealed book."

—Dr. J. A. Robinson, "Some Thoughts on Inspiration".

"What inspiration is, must be learned from what it does. We must not determine the character of the books from the inspiration, but must rather determine the nature of the inspiration from the books."

—Prof. B. Bowne.

CHAPTER V.

HOW DOES THE BIBLE STAND TO-DAY?

Any attempt to sum up in few words the whole truth concerning the Bible in modern light, involves overwhelming difficulties. Such encyclopædic knowledge is required, together with undaunted courage, that it seems positively immodest to take it in hand. Yet it is unquestionably as advantageous as necessary that from time to time progress should be reported in what must be termed the new and true appreciation of the Bible, as distinct from what has hitherto obtained, more especially since the time of the Reformation. How potent as well as sincere this latter has been, must be estimated from the two great certainties, beyond all question, which lift the Bible out of comparison with any other sacred writings of religion known to humanity. The extent to which it has been translated into the varying languages of mankind, and circulated throughout the world, is utterly unparalleled. So too is the literature which has grown up in connexion with it. The flood of books, indeed, upon the Bible, not only exceeds those issued upon any other subject, but appears to grow greater year by year as modern knowledge increases, and, in the form of criticism, claims to examine every portion of both Old and New Testaments with relentless scrutiny. It is a human axiom that every question has two sides, and with what rancorous vehemence this was illustrated in the theological conflicts of the first four Christian centuries, Church history tells us only too

plainly. But although we have happily evolved beyond the physical violence of those times, and neither the cruel persecution of Diocletian nor the murderous Inquisition is to be any longer feared, yet there are still two sides in regard to the Bible, even amongst Christian believers, which are as pronounced as strong words and unmeasured acrimony can make them.

We may here pass by as unworthy of serious regard the militant minority who can see in the Bible only an object of ruthless and often scurrilous attack.[1] Such an attitude is sufficiently summed up and rebuked by Prof. Huxley, as an acute and impartial observer, when he says—

> "It appears to me that if there is anybody more objectionable than the orthodox Bibliolater, it is the heterodox Philistine, who can discover in a literature which in some respects has no superior, nothing but a subject for scoffing and an occasion for the display of his conceited ignorance of the debt he owes to former generations."[2]

The two camps into which—ignoring, as here we must, shades of differing opinion—Christendom is

[1] Thus the author of "God and My Neighbour," who professes to be intelligent and high-minded, sums up his appreciation of the "Holy Bible" as a "volume of fables and errors collected thousands of years ago by superstitious priests and prophets of Palestine and Egypt and Assyria—an incongruous and contradictory collection of tribal traditions and ancient fables written by men of genius and imagination". This, however, is mildness itself, compared with the indiscriminate abuse published under the auspices of Secularism. One booklet openly confesses to have "mutilated several Bibles" by cutting them to pieces with a penknife, in order to pick out instances of "contradictions, absurdities, immoralities, and obscenities" and then print them side by side, absolutely regardless of any context or connexion, as specimens of Bible teaching.

[2] "Essays on Controverted Questions," Prologue, p. 51.

now divided over the Bible, are equally strong and sincere in their convictions, though far from being equally well-informed. On the one hand there is a deep, genuine, undefined and indefinable, but tenacious and indeed unshakable clinging to the Bible, as it appears in the "Authorized" Version, which is not over-estimated by Mr. Allanson Picton when he says—

> "To this reverent affection of whole peoples for the Bible, there is absolutely no parallel and no analogy elsewhere. For reasons far other than those imagined by our fathers, the Bible has found a place in the heart, soul, conscience, and affections of common men and women of the West, such as no Veda, nor Zend Avesta, nor Chinese classics, nor Koran, ever had a chance of attaining."[1]

In our own country, tradition, patriotism, custom, sincerity, and dear old associations, have combined with ignorance to make any attempt to correlate the various portions of the Old and New Testaments with modern knowledge, the most difficult task in the whole purview of Christianity. Indeed, up to quite recent years, any suggestion that the older views must be modified, could only be made at the peril of a public teacher's reputation for "soundness," and with certain risk to his practical prospects amongst Christian Churches. Nor has such an attitude by any means ceased. There are vast numbers in the "Low" section of the Anglican Church, as well as amongst the Evangelical Free Churches, whose watchword is "Hands off the old Book". By which is connoted a blind, dogged belief, as firm as undefined, that the whole Bible, just as it stands, is

[1] "Man and the Bible," p. 2.

the "Word of God," in a sense which necessarily involves the equal and verbal inspiration of all its parts.

Strong, however, as is this persuasion—often quite beyond any reasonable appeal—truth is yet stronger, and is gradually but surely making its way. Books are appearing, sometimes from unexpected quarters, and pulpit utterances are multiplying, which show unmistakably that a new era of thought and feeling is dawning. And this not only for experts in the realm of Biblical scholarship, but for the common people, who may always be trusted to hear gladly when truth is put before them on a reasonable basis and in intelligible language.

The tercentenary of the Revision of the English Bible in 1611 was made a great event of last year; and no Christian can fail to appreciate the vast and noble service which that version, commonly but not accurately termed the "Authorized," has rendered. There is, however, some real danger lest the multiplication of pulpit eulogies and platform admiration, together with Royal presentations and newspaper articles, should blind us, by the very glow of their appreciation, to important facts which in these days have to be faced. Popularity is generally not far from superficiality, and a great wave of sentiment is not always and necessarily pure advantage. There are, after all, certain present-day facts which must be reckoned with, and out of any intelligent and honest appreciation of these, there must emerge a situation in regard to the Bible which has had no previous parallel. The complexity of the case, in all that has to be unlearned as well as learned, increases rather than diminishes the seriousness with which it is pressing upon the Christian churches of this generation.

Succinctly stated, without any attempt at the

justification which could easily be supplied, the main features of the Biblical position to-day are as follows.

1. In proportion to the population, the Bible is less read to-day than ever. It is quite true that the rise and progress of criticism have led a minority to study the Scriptures more closely, but as to the majority of the forty-five millions of these realms, the contrast between what we find to-day and what J. R. Green tells us of the England of Elizabeth, is immeasurable :—

> "England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible. It was as yet the one English book which was familiar to every Englishman ; it was read at churches and read at home, and everywhere its words as they fell on ears which custom had not deadened to their force and beauty, kindled a startling enthusiasm."

The great decline in general Bible reading has been timidly acknowledged in most of the speeches and writings which have accompanied the tercentenary celebrations, but not with such outspoken honesty as the facts of the case demand. The existence of several organizations like the International Bible Reading Association, whilst enlisting many in a somewhat superficial undertaking, does not affect the modern world to any appreciable extent. For this growing neglect of the Bible, which only those can fail to see who are wilfully blind, there are plain and sufficient reasons.

(i) Bibles have become so common, so easy of access, so cheap to buy, that in accordance with the tendencies of human nature, familiarity has bred contempt to no small extent. When the only Bible in a parish was chained to the desk in the church,

or when, later, the purchase of a Bible meant, even for the well-to-do, considerable effort and sacrifice, it was a natural consequence that much store was set upon the volume, and its study was deemed a privilege. But now that the New Testament, well printed, may be bought for a penny, and the whole Bible for a few coppers, the inevitable result is that that which costs little is accounted worth little, and the volume which every one may carry conveniently in his pocket and study when he will, is appreciated no more than the air the farmer breathes as he walks, or the ground on which football crowds disport themselves.

(ii) Furthermore, the whole mental world is altered through the enormous development of literature of all kinds. "No history," says Mr. Green, "no romance, no poetry, save the little-known verse of Chaucer, existed for any practical purpose in the English tongue, when the Bible was ordered to be set up in churches." The change from such an intellectual atmosphere to that of to-day, with bookshops swarming everywhere, ever cheaper editions of the world's best literary productions multiplying continually, and our railway bookstalls groaning under the growing mass of ephemeral and superficial publications, is simply beyond expression. The Bible is crowded out.

(iii) Such result is all the more inevitable when to the flood of literature is added the whirl of modern business. For those whom the law prescribes an eight hours' day of work and no more, there may be some possibility of leisure, but he must be a pious optimist indeed who can imagine that the artisan class thus indicated spend any appreciable part of that leisure in Bible reading. As for the middle classes, who really constitute the business portion of the community, any one acquainted at first hand

with modern business or commercial methods, knows that there is less and less opportunity each decade to spend time in Bible study. And even where some opportunity might be secured, the probabilities are that the inevitable expenditure of energy in toil, or of nerve and brain in worry, leaves little disposition for any but such light and attractive reading as certainly the Bible does not offer.

(iv) There is, moreover, a widespread practical notion, none the less influential for being nebulous, that in the ordinary walks of life—without casting any slur upon the accepted Christian estimate of the Bible—all that one needs to know has been secured at school, or is to be obtained by frequenting a "place of worship" and listening to the "lessons" there publicly read. As a matter of fact, concerning which there is no doubt whatever, for thousands even of respectable church-goers, this is all the Bible study that is attempted from January to December. It is natural, though from the Christian standpoint lamentable, that as a consequence, the actual ignorance of the average church attendant in regard to the Bible, beyond a few familiar phrases, is unbounded.

(v) Last, though not least, as an explanation for present-day popular ignoring of the Bible, comes that indefinable but most potent reality known as "the modern atmosphere". The fact that four-fifths of the people are outside all the churches, together with the steadily persistent decline in church membership, cannot but have some general cause. We call it indifference to religion. That, however, only removes the cause a step further back, and leaves us with the inquiry as to why the modern man should be so indifferent. The full answer must be postponed. Here it must be frankly acknowledged that the mass of our fellow-men do not feel their need of

religion in general, or of Christianity in particular, and with such *laissez-faire* comes naturally an indisposition to trouble about the Bible at all. The most convenient and apparently satisfactory position, is a neutral half-way house between a militant minority who attack it, and the religious minority who revere it. When all allowance, therefore, is made for the quiet and unostentatious appreciative reading of the Bible still pursued by very many, and for the good work accomplished by Bible classes of all kinds, the outstanding fact still remains that this country, which some three centuries ago was the land of one book, now contains millions of men and women who never take it in hand. They are either completely content with such confused memories of it as may abide from childhood, or quite satisfied to ignore it altogether. Of the great bulk of the modern population of these realms this is true. As for other nations in Europe, or America, they certainly exhibit no contrast hereto. The truth is, undoubtedly, that they show decidedly less, not greater, disposition to treat the Bible as a daily companion.

2. The next noteworthy fact is that the Bible cannot now be read as it formerly was. It is utterly useless, even if it were wise and worthy, to ignore the immense advance in knowledge of all kinds which has taken place during the three centuries that have elapsed since the version of 1611 appeared. It is equally vain to assume or pretend that our modern acquaintance with science and history and criticism does not, or need not, affect the appreciation of the Bible. One might as well say that the rising of the sun, with its scattering of gloom and fog, has no effect upon our appreciation of a landscape. Full well we know how wonderfully the methods and results of science have improved since its students ceased to construct theories first and then endeavour

to make facts square with them. Now the facts come first, and all inferences or theories must bend to them. In history, moreover, numbers of unexpected discoveries, harvested by increasing diligence and accuracy, have prevented misrepresentation and done away with mere imagination. But all this must also apply, and does apply, to the Bible. It is no longer permissible, even if it were desirable, for men to construct a theory—either in the interest of belief or unbelief[1]—as to what a Bible should be. The business of the honest student is to do with the Bible what men of science have done and are doing with nature, viz. examine patiently and impartially the actual facts presented to them.

No man has any right to come to the Bible with a predetermined doctrine as to what he must and shall find there, either to confirm or to disprove some theory of inspiration. When it is said that the Bible comes to us with a history and associations which prevent our dealing with it as with other books, the plain reply is that such a suggestion cuts both ways. If the Bible has been in many cases an impulse for righteousness, it has also been the cause of the cruel murder of thousands of innocent women as witches, and of untold horrors in slavery, to say nothing of its influence in religious wars. If it has been and is the solace of myriads of sufferers, and the inspiration of countless numbers of noble characters, as also the well-spring of domestic purity and happiness, the counter truth cannot be denied, viz. that it has been used as the source of the most narrow-minded bigotry, and the ground

[1] Thus one opponent of all things Christian writes hereupon—"What would one naturally expect in a revelation by God to man? If the Bible is the word of God, the Bible will be perfect. If the Bible is not perfect, it cannot be the word of a God who is perfect"—wherein the logic is as poor as the method is unscientific.

of the most bloody religious persecutions. Both these usages of this book cannot be warranted. If our modern minds and hearts revolt, as they must, from the dark side of the record, it is then altogether pertinent to remark that all these unworthy and indefensible results of Bible study came from refusing what the sincere thought of to-day demands, i.e. that the Bible should be treated as any other book, with fair and full scrutiny, and with application of the same methods of investigation which have been proved trustworthy in all other realms of study. The criticism, whether "higher" or "lower," which is by some Christians even yet so much feared or so vehemently denounced, is nothing more or less than an honest attempt to do this. It has been well said that "He who is afraid of science, does not believe in God". But such a true aphorism has wider application. There is certainly equal ground for saying that he who is afraid of criticism does not believe in truth. If Christianity requires for its foundation either more or less than truth, it is not only doomed but well doomed.

From the modern careful and thorough-going examination of the Bible, certain results of greatest importance cannot but follow. These can, of course, only be summarized here, but they are amply demonstrated elsewhere, and may therefore be stated with confidence, just as they must for the truth's sake be recorded without equivocation.

(i) The Bible cannot, without qualification, be truthfully called the "Word of God". The fact that this name is so often applied to it even by many modern preachers and teachers of ability, does not affect the plain reasons why such an appellation is unwarranted. If it could always be explained that such a title is only a general term, really meaning no more than that the Hebrew Scriptures contain a

progressive revelation of the Divine nature which culminates in the doctrine of Jesus in the New Testament, then little harm would be done. As it is, however, the ceaseless and careless reiteration of this phrase does double mischief. It plays into the hands of the bitterest foes of the Bible, who desire nothing so much as that it should be indiscriminately called by this name. For they can then immediately produce, in sinister triumph, passages from the Old Testament which not only flatly contradict Christ's teaching, but shock our noblest instincts and run counter to the plainest morality. If these were in any sense the word of God, the Christian religion, as one of its opponents affirms, would not last a year. But scarcely less harm is wrought amongst believers by the same indiscriminateness. For it is thus that the most dreadful and unchristian things have been said and done, simply because, being in the Bible—no matter where—they have been regarded as part of "the word of God," and therefore binding upon all men for all time. The extent to which this is carried in the name of evangelical religion, is only too well illustrated just now in a volume which boasts of having been issued to the number of 50,000, and specifically declares concerning the whole Bible—as "the word of God"—that—

> "It bases its claim to acceptance *entirely* upon the oft-repeated declaration 'Thus saith Jehovah'."

Whereas, in spite of this writer's italics, the Bible never does anything of the kind. There is no one single occurrence of the quoted phrase which refers to the Bible at all, as any one can see who looks with open eyes. Yet in spite of the plainest facts, this writer, who boasts his superior Christian

devotion, goes on—representing unfortunately only too many others—

> "The very nature of the Book requires that if we be logical we either accept it because the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it, or that we cast it aside as the greatest of all human impostures."[1]

It is truly difficult to speak with patience of such declarations in the name of the Christian belief. Not only because of the utter falsity—for certainly "the mouth of Jehovah" has never said anything whatever as to the nature of the Bible—but because of the unwarrantable dilemma suggested and the inevitably mischievous effect of it.

(ii) It will be noticed also that special emphasis is laid upon "The Book"—with a capital letter. So again, "This Book makes extraordinary claims and demands upon men". As a matter of fact, it does not do so at all. But for the moment it is the characterization of the Bible as "The Book," or more often still as "The Book of books," which calls for notice. The seeming truth of such a title is but superficial compensation for the real harm wrought by its thoughtless employment. A recent writer, who is by no means given to extremes, and speaks from the evangelical standpoint, says truly hereupon—

> "We have here to deal with the extraordinary perversity and unfairness so common in our day, of treating the Scriptures as if the whole collection were only one book. Of all the unfair devices for weakening the evidences of Christianity this is perhaps the very worst. And it is surprising that so many good Christians allow and encourage it—sometimes demand

[1] "The World and Its God," by Philip Mauro.

> it. So great is the mischief arising from this, that it would almost seem a pity that even for convenience the sixty-six or more books which form our Bible are so constantly bound together in one volume." [1]

It would be easy enough to illustrate what this writer truly calls the "monstrous injustice" of this practice. But the harm accruing from it is too manifold to be here set out in detail. Suffice it to say that whoever first rendered the old words τὰ βίβλια as a feminine singular, instead of a neuter plural, whether he knew what he was doing or not, inflicted immeasurable loss on the Christian Church, and paved the way for costly error. "The Bible," as we now unalterably term it, is not a book at all, but a collection of books which is only inadequately termed a "Divine library". It is really a human literature, shot through with Divine influences. But a literature necessarily consists of many kinds of writing, and extends over many generations of human life, thus representing many greatly differing conditions of thought and environment. All these varying elements, which common sense no less than common honesty demands should be fairly considered in estimating any writings, have been and yet are by myriads of Bible readers entirely ignored. They prefer to remain under the spell of a genuine "Bibliolatry" which refuses to see in the "Book of books" anything other than an entirely Divine production in one volume. This is then to be received as such with an unquestioning simplicity, the proper term for which is childish credulity.

Dr. Warschauer well asks, in his excellent volume recently published—

[1] Dr. J. Monro Gibson, "The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture," p. 204.

> "Is it reasonable that we should read the poetry of the Bible as if it were prose, the philosophy as though it were legislation, the vision as though it were history? It is the infinite variety of the Bible that constitutes one of the secrets of its charm—for quite apart from its Divine appeal its contents are as many-sided as humanity itself; yet a mechanical and undiscriminating theory of Scripture has placed all these contents on one and the same level, for no better reason than that they all form part of the same volume."[1]

(iii) The "level" here mentioned is, however, a literary level. There is for all Christian interests a more important moral and spiritual level to be considered. The lamentable fact is that even yet, after, say, half a century of discriminating teaching in not a few influential quarters, the greater number of ordinary Christian people, adherents and members of Churches alike, persist in treating the varying portions of the sacred literature gathered together in the Bible as all alike equally inspired, equally precious, equally authoritative. It is nothing less than amazing how this gross and harmful misrepresentation is countenanced by good and able men who cannot but know better. To take only one instance out of a host, here is a volume by a writer whose general ability and scholarship no one will question, issued under the title "The Bible under Trial". The many excellencies of the work may be freely acknowledged. Yet how does its commission open? Thus,

> "I would fain speak a word to remove the disquietude under which many labour as if Christianity and God's word were at length about to be engulfed in the encroaching waves

[1] "What is the Bible?" p. 25.

> of scepticism. No such consequence as this is going to follow. 'The word of the Lord,' the Psalm says, 'is tried.' Again, 'The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, purified seven times'. The Bible least of all need shrink from this ordeal of trial, nor does it."

Here, once more, we see that without any qualification the Bible is declared to be "God's word," and certain picked utterances from one portion of it, are not only made to apply to the whole collection of writings in both the Old and New Testaments—which is manifestly impossible—but the whole heterogeneous contents of both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are taken *en bloc*, as sufficiently described by the affirmation that "God's word has been a tried word in all ages"! It is simply impossible to estimate the loss and mischief which accrue to the Christian Church and to the kingdom of Christ amongst men, from this utterly untrue, unwarranted, and superficial lumping together of writings immeasurably different in every respect, under a plea that they were each and all integral parts of "God's word". The results have, in very deed, been calamitous and irremediable. To it have been due the fearful conceptions of God which have been so saddled upon Christianity as to drive numbers of thoughtful men into utter unbelief; to it must be attributed the ghastly horrors that defile Church history, perpetrated by sincere believers; from it were drawn the polygamous sanctions of Mormonism, no less than the opposition of Christian bishops in the House of Lords to marriage with a deceased wife's sister; to it must be traced, in general, by far the greater part of those popular misconceptions of Christian truth and duty which still so seriously hinder the progress of Christ's true Gospel in our

modern world. The bondage of the Levitical law of "commandments contained in ordinances," from which all the genius and devotion of Paul scarcely availed to save the early Church, has been repeated since the Reformation in a mechanical theory of Biblical inspiration which demanded equal appreciation, reverence, and obedience, for all parts of the Bible alike, and so sought to bind on the Christian conscience a yoke which neither our Puritan fathers nor we are able to bear. It can, therefore, never be said too plainly that for the Christian believer, the Old Testament is always and only of such value as Christ puts upon it, and that all its vastly varying portions must be tested for acceptance or rejection by His canons of truth, and by the spirit which we learn from Him.

(iv) At the root of the costly errors which represented the Bible as one book equally binding in all its parts, lay the great foundation mistake known as "verbal inspiration". Although discarded now by all the more thoughtful in the Churches, it is by no means wholly defunct. In sporadic fashion it is continually reappearing. As when quite recently the well-known London pastor of an influential church openly claimed that "all his success had been due to his acceptance of the Bible as verbally inspired, the veritable word of God, just as it stands," i.e. in the version of 1611. To this school also belong all those—and they are by no means few—who repeat on every possible occasion that they believe in "the whole Bible from back to back," and refer to the higher criticism as "The indiscreet nonsense talked by prominent insiders to whom human nature and the wisdom of man are more reliable than the Book which is itself the word of the living God".[1] Such

[1] The writer of this sentence also affirms that "the allegory and picture theories of Genesis are so much clever nonsense. There is

deliverances would be only pitiful if they were not also influential, and that amongst the young and uneducated who most need true guidance in these times of unrest. It must, however, be said with all possible plainness and emphasis that this is not true guidance. The theory of inspiration which involves that

> "every book, chapter, paragraph, verse, sentence, clause, phrase and word, are the direct gift of God to the children of men, and the whole Bible is the veritable word of God so that all portions of it are of equal value and authority and whoever denies any single part of it, virtually denies it entirely, while whoever accepts any part of it, is under obligation to accept it all"

may be the view which has dominated the theology of Protestantism for the last three centuries, and still practically prevails throughout the rank and file of the Evangelical Churches. Nevertheless, it is so demonstrably untrue, and fraught with immeasurable harm, that it must be earnestly opposed by every one who believes in the sacredness of truth, and desires the better appreciation of the Bible.

(v) The same must be said in regard to the twin fallacy which is practically inseparable from the preceding, viz. that which is known as the "inerrancy" of the Bible. One wonders how such a notion could ever be promulgated amongst people permitted to

no trace of any such thing as evolution in God's creation. Hence we believe that the Genesis account of creation and the fall of man will be held closely to the hearts of multitudes when Darwin's doctrine has been consigned to the limbo of exploded scientific fallacies." That such utterances can come from the pen of a well-known and highly popular Wesleyan minister, who is doing his utmost to enforce them throughout the country, shows how great is still the need for rational teaching on this important theme in modern Christian Churches.

read this religious literature for themselves. But when once a theory has hold of the popular mind, it seems to be invulnerable. This particular doctrine of complete "Biblical infallibility" is so especially open to disproof, that the tenacity with which it has been maintained and the timid hesitation with which the contrary is now beginning to be admitted by the average Christian, are truly amazing. It were a thankless and unnecessary task, impossible here, to enumerate in detail the unmistakable errors, and contradictions, and discrepancies, as well as definite mistakes in history, and statements utterly irreconcilable with science, to say nothing of gross exaggerations in numbers and conceptions of God and morality for ever impossible to the Christian mind, which are found in the Old Testament. In themselves they are quite harmless. A real and reasonable appreciation of the Scriptures is no more disturbed by them, than is a man's enjoyment of a summer's day by the knowledge that there are real spots on the sun. On the other hand, no Christian mistake whatever has given such opportunity to opponents as this. It is so easy to get the sincere but uninstructed believer to pledge his faith to the infallibility of the "Book of books," and then adduce a crop of small errors as a triumphant nemesis. Happily the truth in this respect is spreading, in spite of the vehement appeals of those who call themselves members of a "Bible League," and mean so well whilst they do so ill.

All these five items combine to show that the Bible cannot to-day be read as it has hitherto been by multitudes of devout believers. To very many this will seem sad loss, and it will be difficult to show them that it is most real gain.

3. Although it is not necessary here to describe in detail the kinds and degrees of definite modern

attacks upon the Bible, it must be remembered that there are such; and they are by no means so uninfluential as Christian Churches comfortably assume. It is true that the former virulence which characterized the onslaughts of Thomas Paine, Charles Bradlaugh, and Colonel Ingersoll, has largely disappeared, thanks to the "criticism" which has shown that their attacks were misdirected. But relics of the old spirit sometimes appear, and where the former theories of inspiration are maintained, they are still as mischievous as unanswerable. As a rule, however, the worst that they can be now said to accomplish, is to help to make the bulk of the people content without considering the Bible at all.

4. No one can question that as in many other respects, so in regard to the Bible, we are passing through times of transition. It is as vain to deny as useless to resist the tendencies to change which are working in modern thought everywhere. On the whole they are making for genuine progress. But during any period of transition, especially in religion, some amount of confusion, not to say panic, is inevitable. All that can be done is to persist patiently in maintaining ascertained truth against what is mostly, if not merely, traditional. So far as the Bible is concerned, the people of these realms are to-day certainly far removed from the "people of one book" who lived in the time of Cromwell. But Puritan England was by no means Paradise. Our Puritan forefathers, however noble in many respects, were assuredly not perfect. They misunderstood the Bible as greatly as they revered it. Under the influence of their theology with its cast-iron theory of inspiration, they attempted what was not only in itself impossible but was directly and emphatically forbidden by Christ Himself, viz. to put the Old Covenant on a level with the New, and make the

ideals, customs, laws of the Pentateuch to be abiding institutions for all generations of humanity. The disastrous extent of their failure may be fairly estimated from the reaction which swept through the country with the return of Charles the Second.

For all its good qualities, Puritanism was a hard and bitter yoke, even for one country during a short period. For mankind at large, in perpetuity, it would be simply intolerable. And not only naturally but divinely so. For it was a mistake, and mistakes are as contrary to the will of God as to the weal of man. Seventeenth century believers were indeed reverent enough and sincere enough. But neither reverence nor sincerity, nor both combined, are sufficient as exponents of the truth in general, and certainly not of the Bible in particular. That element is lacking upon which Paul, in the very midst of his fervour and devotion, laid such stress—"What is it then, I will pray with the spirit, I will pray with the understanding also—in the Church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue". The duty and privilege of modern Christianity is to supply the element of understanding which the Puritans lacked. In regard to the matter before us, their lack was inevitable. In the absence of the knowledge which could only come to us after three centuries of investigation, their convictions were strong enough—so strong that we have by no means shaken them off yet. But they were not true; and the time for their modification or removal has come. The period of transition is on us. All such periods are times of difficulty, when there is even more need of patience than of zeal. When men's minds are unsettled through the changing of long-established notions; when convictions which have been as dear as strong are seen to be mistaken; when beliefs which were deemed

absolutely and for ever beyond question are openly and emphatically denied; it is inevitable that confusion should arise, and with the confusion comes fear, and out of the fear grows bitterness. At such a time and in the midst of such surroundings, pious platitudes are useless. To suppose that the modern seething sea of questionings will be lulled into peace by whispering over it a few words from the Old Testament which have no connexion with it whatever, and declaring that "the river of God is full of water,"[1] is sheer fatuity. It was Christ Himself who rebuked His contemporaries for not discerning the signs of their times. It is He, not any "pessimist" or "alarmist," who bids us be "wise as serpents" no less than sincere as doves.

Such a maxim truly applies to everything, but here we are concerned only with the Bible. It is as certain that the old appreciation is passing away as it is that the new appreciation is not yet really come. But it is coming; in spite of all the opposition of believers and the maledictions of unbelievers. What ought to be and what might be throughout the churches, has been recently well expressed by a veteran Christian teacher of deservedly world-wide reputation, whose modest volume—"Sixty Years with the Bible"—ought to be carefully studied by all schools of Christian thinkers. Only a summarising sentence can be given here:—

> "In the history I have found the new light making much intelligible that was once confused, and much credible that was once hard to believe. Thus the modern method has come to me not mainly as a perplexing thing, though of

[1] This is what was actually done at the Wesleyan Conference of 1911, when a member of it pointed out the urgent need for frankly facing the whole modern situation.

course it has brought perplexity now and then, but far more as a means of light and help."[1]

If, however, similar testimony from an equally well-known preacher in this country be desired, Dr. Monro Gibson's words are to the same effect. Referring to his becoming acquainted with critical views of the Old Testament, he says—

"It was in this way that I came out of the comparative darkness into better light; and it is in the hope that I may help some others into the same clear and unclouded conviction of the inspiration and authority of the sacred Scriptures, that I try in this book to show the immense gains which have come from the frank recognition of all the facts before us, instead of first settling our theory and then trying to force the facts to fit into it."[2]

5. Such an attitude, at once reasonable, reverent, true to facts, well warranted in principle, and beneficial in result, is however too good to be true at present either for the bulk of believers or for most unbelievers. As Dr. W. N. Clarke further remarks—

"The chief danger about the Bible at present, is that on the one hand it will be studied too much in the mere spirit of criticism, without regard to its religious value, and on the other that the timidity of Christian people on critical grounds will prevent them from holding that religious value in its true rank and place."[3]

The general situation to-day is that believers are afraid of the results of modern knowledge. Thus

[1] "Sixty Years with the Bible," p. 184.
[2] "The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture," p. 9.
[3] p. 254.

they are partly shaken in their estimate of the Bible, and partly disposed to cling blindly to it or fight for it irrespective of what is true ; whilst unbelievers are giving themselves to proleptic boastings that now, at last, the Bible is being dethroned from its place in the affections of the Church and its hold upon the mind of the world. There is thus no small danger of its being increasingly ignored. It is certainly less read at home by ordinary Christians. It is less employed in day schools ; whence also there is every probability that clerical bigotry will eventually drive it out altogether. In Sunday schools it is very little taught at best, because of the limits of time. In many cases that little is both badly taught, and mistakenly. Speaking as carefully as generally, and when all allowance has been made for some excellent institutions for Bible reading, the world of to-day, even in Great Britain, has less time, less felt need, less disposition to pay serious attention to the Bible, than ever before since it was an open book in our language. It may be easy for some religious optimists to dispute this estimate. But they do not and cannot alter the facts of daily life upon which it is only too surely based.

6. There is no fear that the Bible will wholly lose its influence. But it is doing so to some real extent at present. For a while, at least, the unsettling process must go on, though how long it will be loss rather than gain, will be for Christian Churches and their teachers to decide. Meanwhile, there is the danger of loss both real and great to the present generation. For when all the attacks upon Christianity "through the sides of Judaism" have spent themselves, and all the harsh indictments and coarse diatribes of some opponents have been uttered, there yet remains the witness of history, of experience, and of observation, as to the influence of

the Bible for good upon men and nations alike. The deliberate and impartial words of Mr. J. R. Green, in his well-known history, bearing upon this, deserve to be remembered :—

> "But far greater than its effect upon literature or social phrase, was the effect of the Bible on the character of the people at large. Elizabeth might silence or tune the pulpits, but it was impossible for her to silence or tune the great preachers of justice, and mercy, and truth, who spoke from the Book which she had again opened for her people. The whole moral effect which is produced nowadays by the religious newspaper, the tract, the essay, the lecture, the missionary report, the sermon, was then produced by the Bible alone. And its effect in this way, however dispassionately we examine it, was simply amazing. The whole temper of the nation was changed. A new conception of life and of man superseded the old. A new moral and religious impulse spread through every class."[1]

To an extent that cannot be measured, that effect yet remains. There has certainly been a minority, alert, vigorous, implacable, who have denied this good effect, and in strongest language have sought to discredit the Bible altogether.[2] But when all

[1] "Short History of England," p. 449.

[2] As it may be well for the ordinary reader to have a specimen of the kind of estimate which is now more than ever before circulated by means of the cheap press, take the following : "I hold a high opinion of the literary quality of some parts of the Old Testament ; but I seriously think that the loss of the first fourteen books would be a distinct gain to the world. Count up the terrible losses in the many religious wars of the world, add in all the massacres, the martyrdoms, the tortures for religion's sake ; put to the sum the long tale of witchcraft murders ; remember what slavery has been ; and then ask yourselves whether the Book of books deserves all the

such opposition is fairly faced, there is nothing in it to warrant any fear that the influence of the Bible is drawing to a close. All that it signifies is that a new appreciation, based on a better understanding of this whole sacred literature, is demanded. To such, sooner or later, modern Christian Churches will certainly have to come. Sincerity in believing the Bible "just as it stands" to be "the word of God," is nothing to the point. For Mussulmans with equal sincerity so regard their Koran; Buddhists their Tripitaka; Mormons the golden plates of Joe Smith; and Eddyists the weird conglomeration known as "Science and Health with a key to the Scriptures". Nor is old association sufficient plea for rejecting the new knowledge. Peter had to learn that lesson, before he could avow that God had taught him "not to call any man common or unclean". The Bereans are pronounced "more noble," because for the truth's sake they set old associations at defiance.[1] If long-established convictions are to be held as even stronger than old associations, we have Paul's solemn declaration before Agrippa,[2] that for the sake of new truth he had given up his

eulogy that has been laid upon it. I believe that to-day all manner of evil passions are fostered, and all the finer motions of the human spirit are retarded by the habit of reading those savage old books of the Jews as the word of God. I do not think the Bible in its present form is a fit book to place in the hands of children, and it is certainly not a fit book to send out for the salvation of savage and ignorant people." It is easy for the average complacent believer to regard this kind of print with pious horror, but he ought to face two facts. First, that it is multiplying to an extent of which ordinary Church members know nothing. Secondly, that there is some truth in it which cannot in these days be any longer hushed up. For an excellent specimen as to how the Old Testament ought to be and may be set before our young people, see "Old Testament Stories in Modern Light—A Bible Guide for the Young," by T. Rhondda Williams (Jas. Clarke). On such lines, and on no other, will the Bible teaching of the future have to proceed.

[1] Acts XVII. 11. [2] Acts XXVI. 9.

earliest and strongest beliefs. Thus we are reminded that so long as reason lasts and any belief at all is worth holding, the crucial question as to Scripture is that propounded to the eunuch by Philip—"Understandest thou what thou readest?" Without understanding, the Bible becomes merely the fetish of the Bibliolater.

7. Meanwhile the main features of the situation which have now to be faced by all professing Christians are as follows:—

(i) All that is of force in the current objections to the Bible, is due to the mistaken handling of it by its friends. Far too long it has been interpreted in a way that is quite unnatural, unwarranted, untrue. Proper inquiry into the times and circumstances of each writer has been forbidden. The actual facts of the case have been ignored. Commands that were temporary and precepts that were only adapted to special surroundings, have been exalted into world-wide and eternal obligations. Standards of morality fitted only for a fraction of mankind in a low grade of civilization, have been proclaimed universal and abiding. Passages of Scripture, and even sentences, have been wrenched from their contexts, invested with meanings they never contained, and held up as unlimited threats or promises for all men during all time. It is small wonder that modern intelligence should turn upon such methods with indignation, or that the truly Christian spirit should demand to be set free from such irrational bondage. The tyranny of preconceived theories of inspiration, whether verbal or plenary, has been as bad as other tyrannies, and fraught with corresponding evil consequences. But it has had its day, and must now throughout the Churches cease to be. The enemies of the Bible must be given to understand that this their favourite and almost only effective weapon, is henceforth moribund.

(ii) One of the greatest marvels in religious history is that in spite of all the mistaken and mischievous views concerning the Bible, and all the calamitous efforts of its friends to perpetuate them, its influence on the whole has been so markedly for good, not only at the period described by Mr. Green, but during succeeding generations and throughout the world. To substantiate so favourable a verdict the witness of its eager devotees is not required. The most impartial critics will suffice for appeal. The testimonies of Ruskin, Huxley, Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, Heine, and a host of others, have been so often quoted that it would be misused space to repeat them here. They are in themselves more than sufficient answer to the popular gibes which a cheapened press is ever seeking to disseminate. Of such efforts Huxley's estimate quoted above, is as well warranted as it is outspoken.

(iii) But when the truth of a progressive revelation—"the gradual evolution of the idea of God amongst the Jews from a lower to a higher conception"[1]—is acknowledged and appreciated, "rationalist" attacks lose their last appearance of reason. Indeed the Bible then becomes, as a manifestly faithful record, all the more valuable because of the very things in it which its hostile critics have so often singled out for denunciation. It is no longer taken to be a homogeneous volume, equal in all its parts and equally applicable to all times and nations, but the history of a process of revelation varying as much on a larger scale, and as necessarily, as the education of a child varies, and containing inevitably some elements which must in later times be laid aside, whilst others may remain.

If this principle is clearly understood and unhesitatingly applied, there need be no fear of the

[1] "God and My Neighbour," by R. Blatchford, p. 73.

Bible's becoming an obsolete book, a mere religious curiosity for the museum or library. Rather is it true as Dr. Garvie has recently said :—

> "Not only is the older view of the Bible intellectually impossible for the modern mind, but even if it could be held it would not offer what faith to-day needs. Not a creed, or a code, or a ritual, even though all alleged to be divinely dictated, can relieve the soul's distress; but a history that discloses God's guiding hand and advancing purpose; a personality so sure of God that his faith does not fail in the darkness and desolation of life and death, and an experience of a present salvation from sin, weakness and the fear of death. These alone inspire certainty and victory."

(iv) When the Bible is thus fairly treated; when the mistakes of preceding theologians are corrected; in a word when the Old Testament is viewed always and only in the light of the New; its brighter parts become all the more wonderful and precious, whilst the darker are left out of concern as calling no more for our judgement than our imitation. On this subject Mr. V. F. Storr has well said that—

> "Christians from the earliest times have of course believed that the Old Testament revelation was preparatory for that in the New, but it has been given to this age to bring out more plainly the relation between the two, and to view the whole movement from beginning to end as the gradual unfolding of a magnificent Divine plan. In the light of this conception of development, the revelation recorded in the Bible glows with fresh significance."[1]

[1] "The Inspiration of the Bible," p. 21.

It can never be said too plainly that to the modern Christian mind the Old Testament is always neither more nor less than Jesus makes it, in all that relates alike to God and man.

His revelation is the true and final guide, both to our own Christian conception of God and to our estimate of all the representations of God which are found in the Jewish Scriptures. Where these latter clash with the former, they must be dismissed as archaisms, without hesitation.[1] They are but human mistakes, natural then, inexcusable now. Whether it be the slaughter of the Canaanites, the political massacres of kings, or any other occasion in which "Thus saith the Lord" occurs, the only question for the Christian is, does this reference to God harmonize with Christ's revelation of the Divine Fatherhood? If it does not, then it is but a pitiful human error. "It cannot be that God has changed His moral character. He cannot have approved of deceit and cruelty in Old Testament times, while condemning them in New Testament times. God changes not. It is men's thoughts about God which change."[2] Such errors were pardonable under their circumstances, for they knew no better. For us they would be unpardonable, seeing that we have learned of Jesus Christ.

[1] "In much that I used to suppose I must receive as true of God, I now read the record and effect of what people thought of God—a difference that goes to the very bottom of the matter" (Dr. W. N. Clarke, "Sixty Years, etc.," p. 232). So too Mr. V. F. Storr ("The Inspiration of the Bible," p. 21): "When the Bible records a command from God to massacre the Canaanites, we cannot believe that God actually gave such a command. We say that the men of that time were misled. They attributed to God a command which was really due to their own imperfect notion of God. The theory of plenary inspiration cannot satisfactorily deal with these moral difficulties of the Old Testament. The theory of a progressive revelation, and of an inspiration so interpreted, can deal with them."

[2] V. F. Storr, "The Inspiration of the Bible," p. 21.

So too in regard to the characters of men. It is well to face frankly what in this regard militates against the appreciation of the Bible by the modern mind. Take one popular specimen. After a chapter of rancorous and one-sided exaggeration—for even Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and Samson, and David, had their good points—a well-known anti-Christian journalist writes thus :—

> "Now it is not necessary for me to harp upon the conduct of these men of God; what I want to point out is that these cruel and ignorant savages have been saddled upon the Christian religion as heroes and as models. I only wish to show that these favourites of God were not admirable characters, and that therefore the Bible cannot be a Divine revelation. As for animus, I do not believe any of these men ever existed."[1]

It were easy to show how uncritical as well as illogical, are all such representations. But they catch the popular eye and are often effective. For which reason their falsity needs exposure. If men were not blinded by prejudice they could not but see that Christ's words dismiss for ever the notion that these, or any other Old Testament heroes, are "models" for Christian believers. Jesus never allowed any other than Himself as a model for His disciples. "I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you"—was His all-comprehensive word. To that ideal all that the Apostles ever said, or did, or wrote, always referred. To assert that the Bible cannot be a Divine revelation because it contains an honest history of imperfect men, is so transparently absurd as to need really no refutation. Yet it must be confessed that many

[1] "God and My Neighbour," pp. 64, 65.

Christian teachers, in pulpits and schools and books, have laid Christianity open to such criticism, in making far too much of some of these Old Testament characters, and have drawn lessons of imitation which should certainly have been lessons of contrast. This, however, is but a human mistake which, with many others, is being slowly but surely corrected, as the minds of believers are freed from false theories of inspiration and encouraged to look with open eyes upon the facts recorded, so as to estimate them from the standard of Jesus Christ. Once again Dr. W. N. Clarke's deliberate judgement, after his sixty years' study, deserves to be repeated :—

> "I now see clearly and gratefully how broad is the contrast between the Christian thought of God and much that stands in the Old Testament; how broad is the contrast too between the best in the Old Testament and much that stands beside it there. This contrast it is my duty to note and my privilege to keep in memory. In dealing with the Bible I am as free to call black black as I am to call white white; and I am delivered from the too familiar temptation to call black white for the glory of God. Thus, difficulty with the Bible on account of these moral contrasts is entirely gone, and can never return to trouble me."[1]

On the whole, therefore, it may be truthfully affirmed that when the Bible is relieved of the burdens which its past and present friends put upon it, and viewed as it ought to be in the light of the new and better Covenant which comes to humanity in the person and work of Jesus Christ, it will neither need apology nor be in any danger of contempt. Instead of being ignored, it will become at once more

[1] p. 233.

interesting and influential than ever before. In the degree in which it becomes in the new light "understanded of the people," instead of being a kind of religious fetish, it will be read afresh with attention which will require no forcing, and will meet with growing practical appreciation. Furthermore, in full view of all the knowledge of the Scriptures of other religions which have only recently become the possession of modern students, it may be said without hesitation, that there is no collection of sacred writings on earth which so merits earnest scrutiny and devout acceptance, as this wonderful religious literature which we call the Bible. Like Christianity itself, it is emerging from the clouds in which sincere but mistaken piety has all too long enveloped it, with every promise of that clearer light and greater warmth which this century needs. Its true appreciation, like the rising of the sun on a foggy morning, will avail to rid us of mediaeval ignorance and ecclesiastical bigotry, no less than of the naturalistic conceit and materialistic scorn for life's real value which threaten with their blight our modern world. "If we are willing"—rightly says an expert modern teacher—"to pay the price, we shall discover in the Bible, and in the life in God of which the Bible is witness, the pearl of great price which with abounding joy we can claim as our own." Then the ancient seer's words, in the light of the teaching of Jesus, become incandescent with a significance beyond his farthest and highest vision: "The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver".

ARE THE CHURCHES HELPING THE MODERN APPRECIATION OF THE BIBLE?

"Whoever was the first dogmatist to make the terms "the Bible" and "the word of God" synonymous, rendered to the cause of truth and religion an immense disservice. The phrase in that sense has no shadow of scriptural authority. It occurs from three to four hundred times in the Old Testament and about a hundred times in the New; and in not one of all those instances is it applied to the Scriptures. The formula of the Reformation in its best days, like that of the Church of England, was not 'Scripture is the word of God' but 'Scripture contains the word of God'."

—Dean Farrar, "History of Interpretation".

"Criticism is not a hostile force hovering round the march of the Christian Church, picking off all loosely attached followers and galling the main body; it is rather the highly trained corps of scouts and skirmishers thrown out on all sides to ascertain in what direction it is safe and possible for the Church to advance."

—Dr. Marcus Dods, "The Bible: its Origin and Nature".

"It is strange and lamentable that people who profess to regard the Bible as God's own word should be so little anxious to find out what God did say that they persistently cling to an antiquated translation although a better one has been available for a generation. It is specially to be regretted that the tercentenary of the so-called 'Authorized' Version has been used to give a new lease of life to a version which constituted an immense advance in 1611, but is unmistakably inferior to the one issued in 1881-1886. The year 1929 will see the centenary of Stephenson's Rocket; but no one will propose to celebrate the occasion by attaching exact replicas of that famous engine to our express trains—the tendency will be rather to emphasise the progress made in the intervening century."

—Dr. J. Warschauer, "What is the Bible?"

"The Churches have hardly faced this problem of the Bible in modern light, even yet; nevertheless the time is at hand when it will have to be faced with candour and thoroughness, for the capacity of the human mind for harbouring contradictory notions side by side without suspecting the contradiction, is after all, not unlimited. Increasing numbers year by year grow aware of the discrepancy between some pronouncements of Scripture and the teachings they receive in the fields of secular knowledge; with results that are often deplorable and even tragic. The Churches and the Sunday schools will have to take up a far more courageous position in regard to this matter than they have done so far. It is the product of antiquated teaching, such as is still given in so many Sunday schools, who becomes the ready victim of the 'Rationalist' propaganda."

—Dr. J. Warschauer, "What is the Bible?"

CHAPTER VI

ARE THE CHURCHES HELPING THE MODERN APPRECIATION OF THE BIBLE?

To such an inquiry only a very hesitating answer can honestly be given. If the Unitarian and some few Congregational Churches be excepted, the following estimate, which forms the opening page of a valuable little book by a well-known Congregational minister, is only too true of the bulk of the Evangelical Churches throughout these realms :—

> "The Bible needs neither our apology nor our eulogy; it only needs to be understood. And it is not understood. Despite the publication of excellent expositions of the conclusions of competent scholars, despite the fact that in the centres of sound learning these conclusions form the basis of instruction, the ignorance of the Christian public is almost undisturbed, and the majority of professional teachers of the Bible speak as if nothing had happened to interfere with the traditional assumption that all our Scriptures are equally inspired, authoritative, and infallible."[1]

The recent tercentenary year of the English version of 1611, has afforded a splendid opportunity for the worthy and impressive recommendation of the Bible to the modern mind, but it is to be feared that little will come of it in the direction most needed.

[1] "The Value of the Old Testament," by Bernard J. Snell (Jas. Clarke & Co.).

Nothing is easier than to multiply eulogies in print, and make mass meetings ring with popular applause; but the permanent utility of such efforts is very small for the present generation. What is really wanted is a plain and reliable statement of the main principles upon which alone the Bible can be urged upon the attention of the modern world, together with the unanimous adoption of those principles in the regular teaching of the Churches. Without both of these, the Bible will count for less and less in the life of the age, and will at the most remain the religious manual of the minority rather than the revered treasure of the majority. How far it is, even now, from being to all Englishmen what the Koran is to all Mussulmans, is manifest enough. Whilst there are many and various reasons for this difference, one of the greatest, if not actually the greatest, is to be found in the well-meant but utterly useless persistence on the part of vast numbers of Christians—teachers and people alike—to maintain what they call "Our grand old Book" on the unchanged lines of the last three centuries. The general tone in which the Bible is continually referred to in many religious periodicals, for instance, is such an exhibition of determined ignoring of all modern increase of knowledge and clearer apprehension of principles, as to make one almost despair for the future; whilst any attempt to suggest a wiser and truer course, will certainly be met only with denunciations. Dr. Selleck is but too well warranted in his attitude of concern:—

> "I believe then that the gravest danger to be feared from Biblical criticism to-day is, not that the acceptance of its teachings will undermine the faith of devout souls, but that the rejection of its well-established results, together with an

> attitude of unfriendliness towards all its work, will do the Christian Church incalculable harm, through the alienation of vast numbers of thoughtful inquiring people."

That what this writer deprecates is taking place to a serious extent, any impartial observer cannot but see. Yet is it naturally a mental process which takes place so quietly, and is so little likely to be mentioned, that there can be no doubt as to the reality of the effect being greater than the appearance. What is to be the general result, rests between Christian teachers and the people to whom they minister. The main features of the present situation seem to be as follows :—

1. It cannot be too plainly said that every occupant of a Christian pulpit in these days, ought to know something more about the Bible than the traditions in which he has been brought up. There is no other realm of life in which the knowledge and practice of a century ago would suffice. There is no shadow of reason why in the highest realm of all, ignorance and obscurantism should prevail. A recent Bampton Lecturer, far removed from rash statement and uncharity, but as examining chaplain to a bishop having special opportunities for knowledge, has spoken seriously hereupon :—

> "Perhaps the greatest cause which makes us unprofitable servants to-day is ignorance. The English clergy was once called the wonder of the world for its learning ; but compared with the lay folk it is a learned clergy no longer. But there are two things every clergyman must know if he is to be a minister of Christ—his Bible and his people. As a Church we must use intelligent criticism and sincere exegesis, if we are to understand what is the word of God

> and be listened to by educated people. As individuals we need perhaps more that deep and exact knowledge of the sacred text which I think is very rare among candidates for Orders, but is worth more than all other learning for purposes of teaching and devotion. There is so much to read, so much to learn nowadays, that it is hard to get such a knowledge of the Bible. Yet we must get it."[1]

Judging, as one must, from the way in which the Bible is read and expounded in public by the average preacher, the people are not likely to be greatly instructed. The perfunctory reading of the "lessons" from the Old Version without note or comment—often with an unnatural ecclesiastical monotone—becomes in unnumbered cases nothing more than a meaningless custom, to which not one in a hundred of the audience pays any genuine or intelligent heed. But bad reading and false exegesis have their roots in poor understanding. And the lack of real understanding is due to unwillingness to spend the time and pains which are confessedly necessary, if the modern Christian teacher is to fulfil his duty. It is so lamentably easy to ignore all that is difficult, and then take refuge in the equally hackneyed and untrue insinuation that the critics are so divided amongst themselves that no good can come from noticing them. Yet take only such a mild statement as this from a thoroughly orthodox source :—

> "Historical criticism has proved with overwhelming force that some of the older views as to the way in which the sacred books were written, were altogether defective. It has taken away the picture of the nation of Israel starting on its career endowed by Moses with a com-

[1] "Bampton Lectures," 1907, by J. H. F. Peile.

pletely developed system of laws adequate for all the needs of the future. Instead of that, it has shown that like the laws of other peoples the laws of Israel grew with the life of the nation and were supplied to meet each successive demand as it arose. Corresponding to the three main codes of law which it discovers in the Pentateuch, it is able to point to the three periods of history during which these codes were active.

"In their broad outlines the results of modern criticism have secured the allegiance of nearly all the scholars of all the Protestant Churches and seem to be impregnable. The task of the future will be much more to interpret than disprove these results."[1]

Such a cautious and gentle estimate may well be taken as the very minimum of educated appreciation of the Bible to-day, upon which all the Churches should be truly and heartily in agreement. Yet apart from the usually hesitant attitude of most evangelical occupants of pulpits, and of course revival and Mission preachers, we find another minister of the very same Church as the lecturer just quoted, who does not shrink from printing and teaching as reckless a general misrepresentation as this—

"The people are not told how often the higher criticism has proved to be the higher conceit, and the higher ignorance; how often its declarations have been falsified by subsequent investigations and explorations; how completely its criticism is at its best hypothetical and based upon assumptions instead of upon the documentary evidence of manuscripts; how

[1] "Fernley Lecture for 1910," by W. J. Moulton, M.A., Tutor, Headingley College, Leeds, pp. xi-xviii.

> easily a lot of its theories about the Elohistic and Jehovistic parts of Genesis can be explained; nor how often and utterly these so-called critics disagree among themselves."[1]

Nor is there any question that such sentiments still pass for special piety amongst vast numbers in the Churches. In by no means few cases, this attitude goes so far as not merely to ignore the Revised Version, but to prohibit its reading in public.

2. Thus it comes to pass that there is yet need for no little courage on the part of such teachers as know and appreciate the truth in modern light, when they desire to impart it to their congregations. Dr. Forsyth has well said that—

> "There is no more difficult position to-day, nor one which evokes less sympathy, than that of the minister who has to stand between the world of modern knowledge on the one hand, and the world of traditional religion on the other, and mediate between them."

But it is also true, as the same competent authority goes on to say, that—

> "The question of belief is becoming a much more serious question for the Free Churches than the question of their public work or social sympathies. What the Church seems to require most at the moment, is less an army of scholars engaged upon research work upon origins, than a growing body of men at once disciplined to scientific sympathies by a proper education in its schools, secured there also in a theology of experimental faith, and at the same time provided with the art of public teaching and en-

[1] "The Churches and the Present Outlook," by Rev. T. Waugh, p. 35.

dowed with the sympathy and tact which win the trust of the evangelical public."[1]

So long as the Churches are supplied with certain kinds of religious literature under the guise of special devotion, it will be immeasurably difficult for an honest and instructed Christian teacher to tell the truth that so much needs to be known about the Bible. Thus the work referred to in the previous section, published by a highly respected firm in London, and obtaining a large circulation, makes the following statements for the benefit of devout Christians :—

> "It can now be asserted upon the authority of the most eminent men of science that not a single fact stands in contradiction to the creation story of Genesis. . . . The important fact which Mr. Spencer and his disciples failed to note is that the operation of the law of evolution is rigidly limited to the circle of the activities of the descendants of Adam. Within that circle everything, without exception, is subject to evolutionary changes. Outside of it there is not a trace of such changes. In a word, the area of the operation of the law of evolution coincides absolutely with the area of the consequence of man's departure from the will of God as described in Genesis III. Evolution is but the law of the career of fallen man. . . . Man then for the first time set himself to do what he has been prone to do ever since, namely to question and pass judgment upon the expediency of a Divine commandment. He became, in a word, a higher critic, that is to say, a man who assumes to criticize the word of God."[2]

[1] "The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture," by J. M. Gibson, pp. x, xi, xvii.

[2] "The World and its God," by Philip Mauro, pp. 15, 21, 33.

This is a specimen of much more of the kind which is not only repeated in other books and booklets, but endorsed as the real truth by thousands of Christians who are as sincere as they are ill-informed. They are apparently altogether blind to the fact that they are giving modern Bible haters exactly the opportunity which is desired, for bringing the Bible into contempt. They are also equally unaware that their own attitude constitutes as real criticism as that which they ignorantly condemn. The sole but significant difference is that they refuse to face the facts which those whom they denounce set before them.

Happily, however, light is breaking in spite of all the well-intended efforts to prevent it. Slowly but surely, intelligent honesty is becoming recognized as the essential element in all genuine piety. But it is even yet a sure way to popularity in the Evangelical Churches, to declaim about "clinging to the old Book," and believing in the Bible "from back to back". It is no less certain that the most careful, sincere, and thoughtful endeavour to lead an ordinary congregation to something truer, deeper, and better than ancient tradition or venerable custom, will be, by a majority, received with thankless coldness, if not bitterly opposed as dangerous heresy. Under these circumstances the Christian teacher of to-day will do well to call to mind the attitude adopted by Peter and John when similarly obliged to contravene established religious usages —"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye". There is good reason to believe that the number is increasing of those who without any trace of scorn for the old, are none the less firmly devoted to the true, and therefore appreciative of the new, as one such says:—

> "Let the truth be told. There is nothing to hide. Pious evasion of the truth has landed us in the deplorable position, which is being widely recognized, that the tendency of men is away from our Churches because they think that there counsel has been darkened, and because they affirm that there they are not sure of hearing the honest truth honestly uttered."[1]

3. As to how much of the new understanding of the Bible may be or should be introduced into ordinary Christian pulpits or public services, no definite rule can be wisely laid down, so much depends upon the man and the environment. But we have the very highest injunction to be "wise as serpents" and to "prove all things". Certainly nothing can excuse entire ignoring of modern knowledge, or faithless fear in acknowledging what is now shown to be true. A coward has no place in the Christian ministry. Even if it be not the preacher's wise

[1] "The Value of the Old Testament," by B. J. Snell, p. 16. To this may be added the words of a well-known conservative scholar of the Anglican Church which worthily summarize the whole situation. In his valuable little booklet entitled "Some Thoughts on Inspiration," Dr. J. A. R. Robinson says: "We answer, then, in the spirit of humility and reverence, that instead of using the Gospels to foreclose inquiry, we must use the results of inquiry to interpret the Gospels. Once again, therefore, in the name of truth, we hold open the door. Let inquiry proceed; the light shall help us, as we reverently welcome and use it. We shall not accept every new hypothesis as bringing the light of truth. We shall test the hypotheses with a rigorous scrutiny; or if we cannot test them ourselves, we shall wait until others whom we can trust have tested them. We shall accept for our guidance the considered verdict of the ablest and most devout of the scholars of the Christian Church. We shall ask them to be honest, fearless, and grave, well weighing their responsibility to guide those who cannot undertake the inquiry for themselves." It is difficult to speak too highly of the little work (sixpence, Longmans) from which these words are taken. Compared with some other issues on this theme, it is as refreshing as a breath of pure air after the hot stuffiness of a crowded assembly.

course, as a rule, to deal with this whole matter directly and categorically from the pulpit, it is always both possible and his solemn duty to impart what is true, as against what is untrue, in his references to Scripture narratives, biographies, didactic principles, and special passages. The very least that can be expected from him is—so far as he can get to know it—the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Any summary, at once adequate and brief, of what this involves in regard to the Bible in modern light, is of course impossible here. By way of suggestion, however, the following may be mentioned as constituting a minimum of what may be expected from "every scribe well trained for the Kingdom of Heaven"[1] in these days.

Assuming that at the present time the English Bible is in all his hearers' hands, he must not shrink from pointing out that the appreciation of the version generally but inaccurately called the "Authorized" Version, may be overdone. No one questions its excellence, and indeed, for the time when it was made, its wonderfulness. But when all the changes have been rung upon the accustomed phrases, as to its being a "well of English undefiled," "a marvel of classical English," "an embodiment of perfect rhythm," etc., etc., it has to be recognized that this revision was no more flawless than the fifteen, or more, others which preceded it. The errors and failings in it were neither few nor trifling. In many cases most serious and fundamental matters of Christian doctrine are involved; whilst in numberless other instances its archaisms, as compared with the speech of to-day, are most misleading. The Revised Version is not perfect, any more than its prede-

[1] Matt. XIII. 52, Weymouth.

cessor; but it is so marked an improvement, in the accuracy of crucial passages and the general fidelity with which the original is represented to the modern average reader, that it and it alone, for the present, ought to be used in all religious services and Sunday schools throughout the country. In America the Standard Edition may well be preferred. But in this country it will for some time be best to keep to the Revised for public use, whilst recommending all ordinary English readers who desire the truth, to supplement it by Dr. Weymouth's "New Testament in Modern Speech," or the "Twentieth Century New Testament," so as to get as near as possible to what Evangelists and Apostles actually wrote.

There ought also to be no hesitation in affirming that the Bible should be approached as any other book, with an open mind, and not with predetermination to find in it all the conventions of orthodoxy. Its composite character should always be recognized, and the notion of treating all its many and varied parts as of equal value and authority, should be distinctly set aside. The importance of taking into account always the special circumstances connected with each writing can scarcely be exaggerated, and to this end it is certainly part of the teacher's duty to acquaint both himself and his people with the best modern helps from the hands of competent scholars. Happily there need be no difficulty about this, thanks to the ever-cheapening press.[1] In any and every case, whether it be called "criticism" or anything else, honest inquiry must be welcomed. If there should happen some such shock as came to good Bishop Colenso when the Zulu put the question to him—"Bishop, what about Exodus xxi. 20?"—it will be gain, in any instance, to lose a wrong

[1] At the close of this section a brief list of specially useful works in this regard will be found.

conception. The words found in the first issue of the "Minutes of the Wesleyan Conference" express the only genuine Christian attitude—

> "What are we afraid of? Of overturning our first principles? If they are false, the sooner they are overturned the better. If they are true, they will bear the strictest investigation."

The great emerging certainty will be that neither any one Christian doctrine, nor any true understanding and appreciation of the Bible itself, can be derived from a few picked passages which in their unwarranted isolation from their context have been called "proof texts". There is always and only one royal road, viz. the careful, thorough, patient, study of the whole connexion in every case, together with intelligent comparison of the results so obtained.

Doubtless this will seem a "large order," alike to many in the pulpit and the pew. But it ought not to be to any a mere counsel of despair. It embodies only the same principles as are applied to every other serious business or study in these days. There is no reason whatever why the modern teacher of religion should be permitted to go on contenting himself with such methods, superficial, half-instructed, out-of-date, as would not be tolerated in any other profession. It has been well and truly said that "If it is heresy to think ahead of one's time, is it not heresy to think behind one's time?"[1]

4. It cannot be denied nor can one be surprised,

[1] "Sixty Years with the Bible," Dr. W. N. Clarke, p. 182—where the author adds, "Thus the case opened to me when the claims of the higher criticism were first presented. I have never seen it in any other light, and for many years I have not talked as if Moses wrote the Pentateuch, or the book of Isaiah had but one author, or Job and Jonah were historical. On these points and various others I am sure; naturally there are some on which I am waiting for certainty, and hold only provisional conclusions."

that in view of all the facts, and of what is said about them by some enemies of the Bible and not a few of its avowed friends, there should be found amongst vast numbers of ordinary believers, a genuine fear, sometimes not far from panic, that the modern view of the Bible is going to rob them of the comfort and inspiration and hope which they have undoubtedly found in it on the old lines of belief. It would be as vain as dishonest to pretend that there is no such loss. It is in some respects as real as inevitable. It were easy enough to reply that it is no loss to lose a shilling and find a sovereign. If, indeed, such finding followed immediately upon the losing, there would be no room for tears. But in the present case it is not always so. Moreover, whilst the old appreciation of the Bible came as an easy inheritance, the new has to be earned; and before that is accomplished there is undoubtedly some real room for lamentation. When the old is going or gone, and the new has not yet been discerned, it is no wonder that the sense of loss seems sometimes overwhelming. The old simplicity and directness which took every comforting sentence that was found anywhere, just as it stood, as the veritable "word of God"; the former unquestioning sense of absolute reliability, to the last detail, which was perfectly content to regard every statement as beyond doubt so long as it was in the Bible; the long-established feeling of reverence which applied "Thus saith the Lord" to every command and every ideal without regard to context; the comforting sense of sufficiency which permitted hosts of sincere believers to be literally men of one book; the hitherto accepted sharp-cut definition of inspiration, which seemed to make everything so clear and so sure for evermore; above all, the unreasoning but most potent sense of old association which so charged familiar words with

tender memories, making the charm of Elizabethan English to be almost heavenly music through the recollections of childhood, and still more sacred as having lingered on the lips of loved ones lost; the thought of losing or even lessening all this, may well, to unsophisticated souls, seem overwhelming. The whole situation is, undoubtedly, one which will require the utmost wisdom and tenderness for many a year to come.

But the words of Christ Himself, as reported in the fourth Gospel, unmistakably summarize His whole message—"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free". Nothing more, nothing less, than "whatsoever things are true"—as Paul loyally put it, will avail as the basis of the Kingdom of Heaven. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." That satisfies all the need for definition and yields a sufficient principle of guidance. When, indeed, it is pointed out that the Bible is not an inspired book, but a collection of the writings and utterances of men who were inspired in greatly varying degrees, and that such inspiration itself admits of no exact definition, many believers become impatient and declaim vehemently against such impious "hair splitting". But such an estimate is true, all the same. And that is the main matter, by the side of which all else is trifling. Any faith which requires untruth in its foundations, is doomed to perish.

5. Happily, it is not difficult to show in regard to the Bible, wherever patience obtains, that the gain from steadily pursuing the truth, at all cost, is immeasurably greater than the loss. It is doubly so, being both negative and positive; and no religious lesson whatever is of greater import in these days.

The negative gain consists in relief from an incubus

of difficulty which had become simply intolerable. How great was the need for such relief, every teacher of a senior Bible class knows well, to say nothing of the everywhere-felt though not always expressed mental troubles of intelligent Christian Church members. Dr. J. A. Robinson has truly summarized the situation in the little booklet above mentioned :—

> "This lower conception of the work of the inspiring Spirit, this supposition of a dictated book every statement of which must needs be historically and scientifically accurate, has gradually fastened itself on the minds of Englishmen since the middle of the seventeenth century, notwithstanding the silent protest of the Church of England and the open protest of such spiritual reformers as the early Quakers. It is this conception which, as knowledge has increased, has produced so grave a perplexity that many men have closed the Old Testament altogether, and to vast multitudes, unless some help is offered them, it will presently become a sealed book." [1]

The matters which tend thus to seal the Old Testament, are so familiar as scarcely to need statement. The view of the first eleven chapters of Genesis as literal and exact history ; the persistent representation of the first chapter as in perfect harmony with modern science ; the often-occurring revolting accompaniments of the phrase "Thus saith the Lord" ; the frightful things directly attributed to God which give such a lurid opportunity for opponents to revile His character ; the standard of morals which satisfied the ancient Jews but repels and disgusts both Jews and Christians to-day ; the simple narration of most stupendous occurrences such as the speaking ass of Balaam, the floating iron, the standing still of

[1] "Some Thoughts on Inspiration," p. 39.

the sun and moon at Joshua's prayer, the slaughter of forty-two children for mocking Elisha, etc., etc.; the representation of the drama of Job and the parable of Jonah as necessarily exact history; all these, with many other things arising out of the current theory of inspiration, had become such real and great stumbling-blocks to Christian faith, that either they or it must certainly be given up. They were alike inevitable and intolerable. But they are so no longer. Whether the new and better understanding of the Bible be called the "Higher Criticism," or aught else, matters nothing. It is the truth which sets us free from error; and no loss on earth is so great gain as the loss of error. For the full statement of this, reference must be made to other excellent works which are now so accessible that it is any man's own fault, be he believer or unbeliever, if he does not see the truth and know it to be such.[1] From the veteran teacher already more than once referred to, the following extract also merits special regard; though the whole book whence these words were taken ought rather to be studied by any and every one who is obsessed with the notion that modern knowledge, honestly applied to the Bible, means the loss of its spiritual influence or the destruction of Christian faith.

> "Thus by all my studies I was pledged to this new form of study which they called the Higher Criticism. How it has been misunderstood! Well I remember the solemnity with

[1] Mr. Storr in his little booklet above mentioned, has specially summarized much in little—"How is it that Jael was praised for treachery; or that the Israelites were commanded by God to massacre hosts of innocent and defenceless Canaanites? It cannot be that God has changed His moral character. It is men's thoughts about God which change" ("The Inspiration of the Bible," p. 21).

which a minister said in my hearing 'The higher criticism is not higher, morally'.

"No one ever said that it was. But it is legitimate morally, and necessary to the understanding of the Bible. Late in the 'eighties I read the statement that the Higher Criticism had already relieved us of more than half of the moral difficulties of the Old Testament. I thought it true and have never doubted it. Indeed, more is true. The Higher Criticism removes the cause of the deepest of those difficulties, for it shows us that Christians need not attribute to the God of Christ all the acts and passions that Israelites attributed to the God of Israel, or approve the moral judgments that were recorded in days of inferior light.

"I commend this experience of mine to the many Christians who have been led to suppose that the higher criticism can be nothing else than a weapon of unbelief. For me it has made the Bible to be far more consistently a Christian book than it had ever been before, and has placed it in my hands more ready for all Christians' use. In my progress towards the restful attitude concerning the Bible which I now hold, I thankfully recognize the Higher Criticism as one of the most valuable of helps."[1]

Should it be said, as it well may be, this is all very well in regard to the Old Testament, but what will become of the New Testament upon the same principles, there need be no hesitancy in reply. The gain through loss will be just as real; the nega-

[1] "Sixty Years with the Bible," pp. 179, 183, 184, 188, 192. The somewhat frequent and lengthy references to this work are given on purpose to direct special attention to it, as being one of the most valuable and timely issues from the modern religious press.

tive relief is both as necessary and as timely. Relief from the compulsory acceptance of every miracle just as related; from the persistent application of isolated proof-texts as the sufficient foundation of Christian doctrine; from a total Paulinism in all those details which were inseparable from the Apostle's training and times; from the costly delusions as to the cataclysmic ushering in of the Millennium, which not only possessed the early Christians but have profitlessly troubled vast numbers of modern disciples, through calculations from cryptic figures in the enigmatic books of Daniel and Revelation. From these, and other cognate errors, modern Christianity must be relieved if it is to endure, let alone to develop.

In regard to the whole Bible, it is scarcely too much to say, that when it is thus viewed in the sober light of our latest knowledge, there are no Biblical difficulties left. It is lamentable indeed to think how tragically those who sincerely maintain the old conceptions of plenary inspiration, play into the hands of all such writers as are represented by the flood of sixpenny reprints issued from the "Rationalist Press Association".[1] It is high time that this utterly unnecessary and unwarranted giving away of the Christian positions ceased. Nothing so pleases those who wish to "smash the churches," as to get a simple and sincere believer to pledge himself to the old "all or none" theory of inspiration. Dr.

[1] On this head Mr. G. Jackson in his instructive book "Studies in the Old Testament," well says, "How much longer one wonders is this kind of thing to last? How much longer will our friends the literalists be content to fetch and carry for the Goliaths of rationalism? Does it never make them uneasy when they see that it is they who provide the grist for the sceptic's mill, that it is out of their arguments and their interpretations that some of faith's most inveterate foes are forging their deadliest weapons against the religion of Christ?" (p. 144).

Monro Gibson has only expressed the truth in saying that—

> "There are multitudes of good earnest souls who do love the light, but have been forced into unbelief by the cruel demand that they must either accept every word of the Bible as coming direct from God, or reject the whole. They are too conscientious to say that they can accept every word; so the only alternative left to them is to be done with it altogether." [1]

From such a cruel dilemma they are happily delivered by the principles of an honest and valid criticism. The summary of the negative gain suggested by Mr. Rhondda Williams in his timely little brochure entitled "Shall We Understand the Bible?" is thus entirely warranted:—

> "The fact is that the criticism much abused by the ignorant, and sometimes made the subject of poor jokes by men who have only touched its fringes with incompetent fingers, has effected the resurrection of the Bible into modern life. With the old theory, in face of rising modern science, nothing could have saved the Bible from falling into disuse. It would have been put upon the shelf as a discredited book. But criticism has shown it to be a well of living water, a literature teeming with points of vital interest for man." [2]

But the positive gains from the newer and truer appreciation of the Bible, are even more distinct and precious. What criticism has taken away of infallible detail, it has more than given back in reliable

[1] "Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture," p. 201. See also Dr. Sanday's valuable Bampton Lectures on Inspiration, pp. 428-431.

[2] p. 80. Published by A. & C. Black.

bulk. The times and circumstances and authorship of all the sixty-six portions of this wonderful literature, are more clearly apprehended now than ever before. Such knowledge is an unmeasured help, not hindrance, to their right understanding and deep appreciation. As regards the Old Testament, words can scarcely express the difference between the old stereotyped view—which yet largely obtains—of a volume Divinely written in chronological order as we now know it, every part of it binding upon the human conscience for evermore, and the newer, truer understanding of it as the record of the gradual development in the minds of men, according to their capacity, of the knowledge of God and of themselves, along with ever-heightening ideals of conduct, character and destiny. This difference can only be appreciated when the present order in which the Old Testament portions are bound up in our English Bibles is set aside, and an arrangement adopted which accords with the facts of history.[1] But the effect may truly be likened to turning a plain photograph into a kinematograph; or to the restoration of some old ruined castle, and peopling it with its former residents in all the varied activities of their daily life.

As to the New Testament, it is well indeed that

[1] See a most helpful little booklet by Mr. C. H. Robinson, entitled "Human Nature a Revelation of the Divine" (Longmans, sixpence, p. 24) where the author well asks, "Why could not a Bible be published by some recognized authority in which the different portions should be arranged according to the order of their composition, as agreed upon by a consensus of more moderate critics? If the Old Testament were made to begin with Amos, and to end with the books of Chronicles or Daniel, and if some indication were given in the text of the Pentateuch to suggest its composite origin, the English reader would find the Book as a whole far more easy to understand than it is at present." A good specimen of such attempt will be found in "The Old Testament Narrative Separated Out," by A. D. Sheffield (Constable, six shillings).

its whole contents should be cast into the crucible; for only so could this generation possibly be assured of the substantial reliability of its most important parts. Even if that should mean the casting of a shadow of hesitation on the date and authorship of some of the minor portions, it would be unmistakable gain. For it is upon the former that the foundations of the Christian faith undoubtedly rest. Thus, in regard to the first three or Synoptic Gospels, and the four greater letters of the Apostle Paul, we are more sure to-day of their genuineness and authenticity than the Church has ever been before.[1] Even as to the Fourth Gospel which is still under discussion, whilst it cannot be concealed that the general consensus of scholarship is rather against than for the Apostolic authorship,[2] how far this is from being a necessary loss to faith may be stated in the words of one who holds that "the Fourth

[1] This is not the occasion for a critical review in detail, but the following may be taken as a fair and reliable statement of modern findings as to dates. For the Gospels, Matthew A.D. 70-90, Mark 60-70, Luke 75-85, John 90-110. Whilst as to Paul's four letters, to Rome, Corinth and Galatia, they were written, almost beyond doubt, between A.D. 56 and 58. It is, however, pertinent to add that the very latest publication by Prof. Harnack is to the effect that not only was Luke genuinely the author of both the Gospel bearing his name and the Acts, but that they were both written *before* the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and whilst Paul was still alive. When all that this involves is appreciated, and correlated with the other reliable results of modern criticism, it may be truly said that through its help the foundations of Christian belief are now established as firmly as history could reasonably be expected to make them.

[2] Yet it must by no means be considered as a closed question. Not only have we the deliberate conclusion—after most elaborate discussion—of the erudite Principal of Manchester College, Oxford (Dr. J. Drummond, an acknowledged Johannine expert) on behalf of the traditional authorship, but the last word on the matter is the emphatic pronouncement of Sir W. M. Ramsay, who ascribes the Fourth Gospel to "the personal knowledge, wide experience, intellect, character, and power, of John the Disciple".

Evangelist remains for us the great Unknown of the New Testament".

> "Thus he is not the chronicler but the inspired interpreter of Christ, and has given us not a supplement to but an indispensable commentary on the earlier Gospels; and while we would not miss what Mark and Luke have taught us concerning the Saviour's earthly life, His sayings and doings, yet without this, the spiritual Gospel, our knowledge of Christ, of God, would be immeasurably less."[1]

As regards those portions of the New Testament about which criticism is undecided, it must never be forgotten that provisional conclusions, accepted as such for the truth's sake, are far worthier from the Christian standpoint than traditional dogmatisms, however venerable, which are blindly held without concern as to their truth or untruth.

Much more, however, might be truly said as to the actual gain, for all purposes of Christian faith, from the new as against the old appreciation of the Bible. It is not enough to affirm that it becomes a new Book. Its wonderfulness as a collection of religious literature only appears when it ceases to be in the old homogeneous sense the "Word of God". In a volume directly derived from Deity, supposing it to be such, there would be nothing to marvel at. It would not indeed be so much an object of awe as any living creature. The marvel of the Bible only emerges when in the very humanness of this literature which is so unquestionable to honest scrutiny,

[1] "What is the Bible?" by Dr. Warschauer (Jas. Clarke & Co.). Not only is this volume a most valuable summary, for the average reader, of the modern situation in regard to the Bible as a whole, but in this particular case of the Fourth Gospel the real gain accruing from the thoroughness of careful scrutiny in face of traditional loss is succinctly expressed on pp. 230-32.

we find really the inworking of the Divine. In regard to the Old Testament, with its thirty-nine portions, proceeding from some forty or more different writers, under all kinds of circumstances, and spread over at least seven or eight centuries, we have to account for the wondrous result expressed by so impartial a critic as Matthew Arnold :—

> "God was to Israel neither an assumption nor a metaphysical idea. He was the power not ourselves that makes for righteousness. Why should we study the Bible? Why will not other books do as well? Why? Because this power is revealed in Israel and the Bible and not by other teachers and books. That is, there is infinitely more of Him there, He is plainer and easier to come at, and incomparably more impressive."[1]

To which may be truly added what Mr. Snell has affirmed, viz. that "it is not too much to say that just as the principle of evolution has made natural history intelligible, so the Higher Criticism is making the history and literature of the Hebrew people intelligible".

But it is on the same principles of critical understanding that the insufficiency of the Old Testament, as a world message for all time, becomes manifest, and, by contrast, the supremacy of Christ and the sufficiency of His Gospel are brought into relief. "The law," as the Apostle puts it, "was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." In coming to Him, the Christian Church learns what alone it can give to the world as the standard of moral values whereby human conduct and character are to be worthily estimated, whether in the Old Testament or in the daily newspaper. There were heroes and

[1] "Literature and Dogma," cheap edition, pp. 96, 98.

villains of old as there are villains and heroes to-day, but for the goodness exhibited, say, in the Psalms, or the badness portrayed with such lurid honesty in portions of the Pentateuch, just as for the nobility or wickedness around us now, the new appreciation of the Bible provides us with a better test than Ithuriel's spear, when it points to Christ alone as "The Way, the Truth, and the Life".

> O Lord and Master of us all,
> Whate'er our name or sign:
> We own Thy sway, we hear Thy call,
> We test our lives by Thine.

Nor is that all. What more is brought home to Christian faith positively by criticism—"the new situation of great interest and importance; the coming method, destined to be characteristic of a period in the history of Biblical science"[1]—cannot be satisfactorily stated in few words. We have noted that for the modern Christian who is "coveting earnestly the best gift" of "understanding," and is open-minded as the Bereans to learn from any truth-bringing source, the loss of some of his "favourite passages," in the old sense, is more than compensated by the solidity of greater gains. The living reality of the great facts upon which ulimately his faith must rest, is now guaranteed to him as never before. So validly established are the main records of those facts, that he can afford to look with undisturbed equanimity, if not with pity, upon the mythical and mythological suggestions which continue sporadically to arise. If there be strong assertions from strange quarters as to the "collapse of historical Christianity"[2] he can now, as never before, treat them

[1] Dr. W. N. Clarke, "Sixty Years, etc.," p. 173.

[2] As when the writer of a pamphlet under this title, who has become a lecturer to the same effect and contributor to the "R.P.A. Annual," persists in calling himself the "Rev." R. Roberts.

with patience, because he knows both that in the New Testament his feet are on the rock, and that the rock is not in the air.

But beyond this, in escaping from the well-meant but none the less real bondage of sharply defined theories and dogmatic definitions of inspiration, he enters upon an unprecedented perception and appreciation of the continuity of the influence of the Divine Spirit who moved the workers and inspired the writers of old. Bezaleel is brought down into common life to-day, and Pentecost ceases to be a thaumaturgic flash, becoming rather the gracious dawning of a day which has been and is ever growing brighter. Inspiration is quite as possible and may be just as real now, as ever during the first Christian century. If a confirmatory "passage" be desired, criticism gives us the assurance we need, without limitation, in removing the last two words of the familiar rendering of John III. 34 and telling the Church of every age whilst the world shall last, that "He whom God hath sent speaks the words of God; for He gives not the spirit by measure".

The same correction of mistake indeed comes thus to pass in regard to the New Testament, as with the Lord's Prayer. All too long and too often have those simple but deep and significant sentences been repeated as if they were so complete and all-comprehensive that their utterance was meant to cover the whole needs of all humanity for all ages. Yet Christ Himself gave no warrant for any such notion. Indeed, by implication, He teaches exactly the contrary. He said distinctly "after this manner" pray ye; thus giving not a model prayer to be repeated, but a pattern of prayer to follow. The truest appreciation therefore, of His lesson, is not in repeating the words as often as we do, but in putting the same naturalness, and humility, and reality, into our

own communings with God. So in regard to the New Testament. Instead of its being a closed system of spiritual truth never to be altered, never lessened, never increased,[1] it is but the initial stage of that real inspiration of all true disciples which Jesus Himself unequivocally promised; and promised without any intimation that it was to be restricted to the little band of bewildered men to whom He said "When He the Spirit of truth is come, He shall abide with you for ever . . . He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you". If we read with greatest profit, and account really inspired, the writings of the Apostle who was not included in that group; so to the end of time will there be others, as there have been during all the ages past, who, according to their souls' development and communion with their Master, will speak living truth to their respective generations. Well says Dr. W. N. Clarke:—

> "I was right in holding the Bible as a unique Book, uniquely precious; but when one thinks of the living God, near to His human creatures and the same for evermore, it cannot be that He has given men no word of revelation from Himself since it was finished. To know God as Jesus has revealed Him, is to know better than that."[2]

To "pass from the using of the Bible in the light of its statements, to using it in the light of its

[1] Of all the pitiful misconceptions to which traditional notions lead the average believer, perhaps no one is more common than the practice of quoting the words in the concluding chapter of Revelation as applying to the whole Bible—"If any man shall add unto . . . shall take away from . . . the words of the book of this prophecy, etc." Whereas it is a mere accident of canonical arrangement which puts them in this position. To apply them to all that precedes between the covers of the Bible, is simple dishonesty.

[2] "Sixty Years, etc.," p. 149.

principles"—is to pass from the mental feebleness of childhood to the strength and liberty of manhood. For all who experience such development, the Bible becomes doubly precious. It is not only a record of religious history on which in all essential matters we may rely for our instruction, but it is a reminder of the Divine immanence from which we may draw unending inspiration. It means and teaches not only that God was in Jesus revealing Himself to the first Christians, but that he has been ever since, and still is, revealing Himself, through the Spirit of Whom Jesus spoke, to every individual who cherishes an open mind and cultivates a pure heart. The New Testament thus becomes at once the only true interpreter of the Old Covenant, and the unmistakable pointer to the perpetuation of the New. The progressive revelation of God which makes itself manifest throughout the older writings, does not cease when we have appreciated Gospels and Epistles. The mission of Jesus embraces no longer a nation, but the whole world of humanity. It invites not a priesthood, but every child of man, into communion and co-operation with God Himself.

6. But the real and abiding gains which thus accrue from turning upon the Bible the fierce yet necessary light of modern knowledge, are much more considerable than can be expressed in a few words. They must be seen and known, to be appreciated.

> "What the Bible teaches through its large revealing, may be something different from what it says in its various statements. Certainly what it teaches in this large way is different from what it says in some of its statements. In my later years I have had to look beyond the sayings to the teaching."[1]

[1] Dr. W. N. Clarke, "Sixty Years, etc.," p. 247.

What Dr. Clarke thus avows for himself, ought to be the inspiring experience of every fully developed Christian. It is the "treasure hid in a field" which every honest and diligent student finds as his reward. But whether the reward be less or more; whether the patience brings the comfort sooner or later; in a word, let the consequences be what they may, the Christian Church is pledged only and wholly to what is true. The whole truth is not yet known concerning all the contents of this wondrous literature. But what is known points with no wavering hand to the conviction that both extremes in regard to it are false. It is neither a flawless, infallible, all-comprehensive, final oracle; nor is it an ordinary collection of religious writings coming into existence at the mere whim of superstitious men, and collected together by the mere hap of events. As for the latter alternative, it was Max Müller who said with scholarly impartiality, "If you would know the superiority of your Bible, compare it with the other sacred books of the East". Whilst as to the former, the position for which in his day Dr. Momerie was persecuted by his co-religionists, is now, beyond all doubt that merits regard, acknowledged to be the true attitude for every impartial thinker:—

> "To most people there seems no middle course between worshipping the Bible as a fetish, and regarding it with contempt. But there *is* a middle course, and as usual the middle course is the right course. I propose to show you that the Bible, though not infallible, is none the less inspired."[1]

Such rational treatment of the Bible is the only true treatment, therefore it alone is the Christian method; it alone is alike worthy of God and man; it alone

[1] "Essays on the Bible," p. 111.

will survive the tests of passing time and growing knowledge; it alone will help the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth.

7. Yet it must never be forgotten that the final and supreme question of all is a practical one. Amidst all our modern growth of knowledge and the state of flux which inevitably follows, in the realm of religion as in all other realms, the one great matter which the Christian Church has to bear in mind above everything else, is that the ultimate test of its whole position is found in life and character. That is to say, the worth of the Bible, both to the Church and to the world of men, turns not upon any theory of inspiration nor any result of criticism, not indeed upon anything in or about the Bible itself, but upon the use made of it by those who profess to regard it as Divinely inspired. What, in a word, is the effect upon conduct and character, of the belief that this collection of writings differs from all others in the speciality of its inspiration and the weight of its authority? That question is still, as it has always been, at once the final test and the greatest difficulty. It is, however, a clear-minded, tender-hearted, wholly sympathetic observer who feels bound in these days to give his deliberate judgement thus:—

> "It cannot, I think, be questioned that the striking contrast between the lives of Christians and the rules which they profess to accept is the great religious difficulty of the present day. . . . The same defect which made men resolve to reform Christianity in the sixteenth century, makes them condemn or reject it in the twentieth; and that defect is its supposed ineffectiveness as a guide and motive of conduct. The attitude of the people to the Churches to-day is not determined by higher criticism

> or questions of ceremonial—though indifference is probably confirmed by the way we manage these controversies—but by the unsatisfactory lives of professing Christians." [1]

It is no less false than futile to dismiss this protest on the ground that it is pessimistic. The facts to which appeal is here made are not lessened, let alone made void, by the usual wave of the optimistic hand. Nine-tenths of the people of this "Christian" country never read the Bible at all, now. If the remaining tenth is sincerely and strongly persuaded that this volume is in any real sense the "word of God," then the justification of their belief will have to be expressed in deeds, not words; in lives, not in books; in conduct and character, not in eulogies of the "Authorized" Version, or eloquent appeals on behalf of the Bible Society. The final and only sufficing proof of inspiration for each man's own soul must be that a right understanding of the Scriptures inspires him to all that he knows to be best and purest, noblest and divinest. But only the exhibition of that inspiration in corresponding character—whether on the part of a man, a church, or a nation—will avail as a witness to the modern world of humanity. It is in this age quite useless for the Churches to emphasize dogmas concerning inspiration, unless there be a level of character superior to that maintained by those to whom inspiration is a fiction. So long, therefore, as there is in the public services of Christian Churches, mechanical routine, superstitious formalism, meaningless verbosity; and in the private lives of Christians, selfishness and pride, pettiness and caste, narrow-mindedness and bigotry; it will be to the modern world only a sham and a mockery to multi-

[1] "Bampton Lectures for 1907," J. H. F. Peile, pp. 6, 17.

ply references to the Bible as "the living Word of God"; or expatiate upon the grand style and "exquisite English" of "the good old Book" of 1611; or drop sinister hints and multiply denunciations concerning the dangers of the Higher Criticism.

Ruskin's words may be brusque, but his vision was clear-sighted when he wrote—to a class of religionists by no means yet extinct:—

> "You women of England are all shrieking with one voice, you and your clergymen together, because you hear of your Bible being attacked. If you chose to obey your Bibles, you would not mind who attacked them. It is just because you never fulfil a single downright precept of the Book, that you are so careful about its credit; and just because you do not care to obey its whole words, that you are so careful about the letter of them. The Bible tells you to dress plainly, and you are mad for finery; the Bible tells you to have pity on the poor, and you crush them under your carriage wheels; the Bible tells you to do justice, and you do not know nor care to know what the Bible word justice means. Do but learn what so much of God's truth as that comes to—and then this critical study of the Bible—this 'attack on the Bible' as you wrongly call it—will cause you no further anxiety."

When all is written or said hereupon, the only valid and final proof for the modern world that the Christian's Bible is really divinely inspired, is a community of inspired men and women. What the Bible, therefore, needs to-day is neither eulogy nor apology; but the witness of those who from a right understanding of it, embody its spiritual principles in their lives, and, as living epistles known and read

of all men, incarnate in all their dealings with their fellows, its worthiest precepts and loftiest ideals. The greatest need of all for the modern appreciation of the Bible, is the answer to Spitta's prayer throughout all the Churches :—

Lord, endue thy word from Heaven
With such light, and love, and power,
That in us its silent leaven
May work on from hour to hour.

Give us grace to bear our witness
To the truths we have embraced ;
And let others both their sweetness
And their quickening virtue taste.

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The Use of the Scriptures in Theology, Dr. W. N. Clarke. T. & T. Clark. 3s. 6d.

IS THERE ANY HEREAFTER?

" Twenty-five years ago I had a rude awakening from my agnosticism and materialism. I was down from the university with my parents for the long vacation. I slept soundly, but awoke suddenly with a vision of my father crossing an iron bridge to which he alone had access, and in front of him, partially obscured, was a gap some four feet wide; but he walked on regardless of the danger. I jumped up, dressed, found my father was out, and went for his assistant. He accompanied me to the only bridge that answered the description, two miles up the river. We were just in time to stop my father, who was calmly walking to destruction. I mention the bare facts. They do not prove man's immortality, but they do establish the existence of some unseen power, intelligent and endowed with knowledge transcending mortals, and able to impart that knowledge. The subject was a healthy undergraduate, not at all dreamy, with all the impudent contempt of youth for anything bordering upon the occult." —" Is Death the End ? " By a well-known writer.

" I am, for all personal purposes, convinced of the persistence of human existence beyond bodily death, and though I am unable to justify that belief in the full and complete manner, yet it is a belief which has been produced by scientific evidence that is based upon facts and experience."—
Sir Oliver Lodge.

" I must say that to my own mind the survival after death has such strong evidence from so many sides, as to be entirely convincing, and much above the evidence required in a court of law."
—Principal Graham, " Dalton Hall ".

" When I look over the whole field of the phenomena, and consider the suppositions that must be made to escape spiritism, which not only one aspect of the case, but every incidental feature of it strengthens, I see no reason except the suspicion of my neighbours for withholding assent."
—Prof. Hyslop.

" Let us take the case of Mrs. Piper, who again and again has given astounding examples of communications from some unseen source, the only possible explanation of which is that they are from the departed spirit. The question of fraud in her case naturally was raised, and it was carefully considered by a committee of astute men. Their unanimous opinion was that no system of fraud could account for the phenomena. That vigorous critic Mr. Podmore, said ' The theory of fraud could not be stretched sufficiently to cover the case. The real proof that fraud is not the explanation, lies in the nature of the revelations actually made '."
—" Is Death the End ? " By a well-known writer.

" The investigation and testing of the facts has disproved, on experimental grounds, the supposition that the existence of mind depends on the mechanism of nerve and brain, as physiological science understands those terms.

" No ; the more love grows, the more it feels it can grow ; the more knowledge grows, the more clearly we hear deeps calling unto deeps waiting to be known. In short the meaning and purpose of man's intellectual and moral endowments are on a scale immeasurably larger than the needs of this brief life demand." —S. H. Mellone, M.A., D.Sc.

CHAPTER VII

IS THERE ANY HEREAFTER?

The three subjects which have probably interested and perplexed the human mind more than any other, are God, freedom, and immortality. So much, indeed, has been spoken and written concerning them, that it seems impossible to suggest anything fresh or final. At successive epochs men of unusual gifts have made more or less impressive contributions to their apprehension. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Paul, Origen, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Kant, Lotze, Edwards, and a host of others, down to the late Prof. W. James, spent themselves freely on these high themes. Yet for the majority of men they still remain amongst the uncertainties. Just now, those who are most anxious to escape the thraldom of a naturalism which is virtually materialism, are looking to Profs. Eucken of Germany and Bergson of France. If for this country the name of Dr. A. R. Wallace, or Sir Oliver Lodge, is added, we have a modern spiritual prophet for each of the three greatest nations of the world. The very least that can be said about their protests, is that they are timely. They voice the fact that an unmistakable reaction has set in against the aggressive materialism of the last century, and this reaction bids fair to continue and develop, in spite of the flood of cheap reprints, and translations of Haeckel, which the Rationalist Press Association has poured over this country during the last few years.

If, however, this reaction be called "spiritual," it

must be with a connotation differing from the usual Christian significance of that term. From the Christian standpoint the scientific rebound from matter to force, or energy, leaves much to be desired. But patience may well prevail, seeing that, as represented by creeds and churches, Christianity itself is undergoing such modifications as have never been conceived before. It is plain beyond all controversy, that much in the name of Christian religion has to be unlearned, and much to be learned. That a "new theology," in some sober sense, has to be wrought out, every honest and intelligent student knows well. What changes are now taking place and will yet come to pass in so-called "orthodoxy," we need not here consider. It is enough to affirm that whatever influence upon Christian belief may be exercised by historical and critical studies, the three main elements above named will always remain as immovable foundations. Christianity without God, freedom, and immortality, is unthinkable. Canon Henson has well said that it is useless to preach the Gospel, unless we can postulate theism and moral responsibility. But he might as truly have added, that even if we could assume these without question—which to-day assuredly we cannot—no Gospel could justify its name to men unless it held out unmistakable promise of good in a life to come, as well as in the life that now is.

The modern religious situation is so complex, and the atmosphere such a veritable Babel of opinions, that any attempt at a truthful summary is specially difficult. From the point of view of Christian ethics, no less than of theology, the three—God, freedom, and immortality are inseparable. But in the interests of clear thought each may and must be considered apart from the others. Dismissing, therefore, the two former, brief but valid answers to

the following inquiries may be of service as stepping stones to conviction in the swirl of modern currents of thought. What do we mean by immortality? What is truly to be said on its behalf? What may be said against it? What is the resultant attitude of science and philosophy at the present time? What is the contribution of theism? What is the weight and worth of all that is pertinent concerning Jesus Christ? What is the ultimate position of modern Christian belief? These are the queries which must be faced, and which cannot but bring in their wake some practical inferences.

What do we mean by immortality?

Ordinary reference to a "hereafter," even by thoughtful people, is always more or less ambiguous. The main question involved may be stated in a variety of ways. Is man merely mortal? Is man immortal? Is death the end of all? Has man an immortal soul? Is man a never-dying soul? Some of these forms of inquiry will not bear scrutiny, and on the whole it is, perhaps, best, as Dr. McTaggart suggests, to adopt the simple but comprehensive question—Are men immortal? Even this, however, really contains two queries which it is most important to distinguish. Does the human self survive death? Does it continue to exist for ever by reason of its very nature? Undoubtedly, in general parlance, our word "immortality" stands for an affirmation of both of these. But the second by no means follows necessarily from the first. Nor is the Christian Church by any means unanimous concerning it, for whilst one theologian of eminence says that:—

> "Man is immortal, i.e. the human personality is undying. The spirit is the person, and

> what is here affirmed is that the human spirit, with its essential powers in which it resembles God, is destined to live on endlessly. A human being will never cease to be a human being:"[1]

another in equally high repute writes that—

> "The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, i.e. the essential and endless permanence of all human souls, so prominent in the teaching of Plato, has no place in the teaching of Christ and His Apostles."[2]

It is not here our task to enter upon the discussion of this difference, beyond pointing out that any real conception of literal eternity, or duration for ever, is impossible to mortal minds. Certainly the usual Greek word *ἀνώνιος* does not connote it. Nor, in our own language, is "eternal" by any means the synonym for "everlasting". The former term is indeed primarily qualitative, not quantitative, and no greater mistake has been made in the whole history of New Testament exegesis, than to explain or refer to the word "eternal" as simply meaning lasting for ever. The attempt to grasp and define the conditions of absolute eternity, is no more necessary, for Christian thought than possible to the human mind. All we can do is all we need do, viz. apprehend the actuality of persistence. From the standpoint of scientific research Sir Oliver Lodge indeed asserts that "a really existent thing can never perish, but only change its form". Whether the human spirit, or self, or soul, comes into the category of existent things, may be open to question. But the general statement is both pertinent and sufficient.

> "If all that really exists, in the highest sense, is immortal, we have only to ask whether our

[1] Dr. W. N. Clarke, "Outline of Christian Theology," p. 192.
[2] "The Immortality of the Soul," Dr. J. A. Beet, p. 36.

> personality, our character, our self, is sufficiently individual, sufficiently characteristic, sufficiently developed, in a word sufficiently real—for if it is, there can then be no doubt of its real continuance. It may return, indeed in some sense to the central store, but not without identity; its individual character will be preserved." [1]

The question of questions, therefore, leaving aside the possibilities of an infinite future, is whether the event of death puts a final end to our existence as persons. And apart from the philosophical suggestion just quoted, the unequivocal and unmistakable answer of Christian faith is—No. Its conviction is that whatever moral qualities or consequences be involved, man who is man is here and now a person; and his personality endures when the physical organism through which it is now known, alike to himself and others, is dissolved by death. Death, then, so far from being the end of all, is but the true beginning of a new and larger life whose end is beyond our conception.

On natural grounds what is to be said for such a belief?

The following items of answer merit, of course, much more extended development than is here possible. Yet a brief summary has its advantages in enabling us more clearly to apprehend their total united force.

1. The instinctive clinging to life which distinguishes all living creatures, is much more significant in man than in any other animals, even the highest vertebrates. Amongst lower or less highly organized creatures, the dread of death is probably nothing more than reflex action through heredity.

[1] "Man and the Universe," Sir Oliver Lodge, p. 178.

But in man it is a definitely thoughtful clinging to existence, which is based equally upon conviction and desire. It is easy to say that there is nothing but the desire to warrant the conviction. But that is neither the whole truth, nor is the desire to be lightly dismissed as superficial sentimentality. It is far too real, too universal, too deep, too strong, to be airily set aside as insignificant. When we read that we are—

> Not only cunning casts in clay:
> Let Science prove we are, and then
> What matters Science unto men,
> At least to me? I would not stay.

the protest is not to be contemned because it is poetry. Reality is by no means confined to mathematics and statistics. Mr. Fiske affirms with reason that "The faith in immortal life is the great poetic achievement of the human mind; it is all-pervasive". Nor is there any exaggeration in his further avowal that

> "The destruction of this sublime poetic conception would be like depriving a planet of its atmosphere; it would leave nothing but a moral desert, as cold and dead as the savage surface of the moon."[1]

It must be confessed that one meets occasionally with men and women who talk as if extinction would be a boon. But it can hardly be said that such individuals have exhibited the best type of living, even here and now. Certainly, they do not speak for the rest of humanity, else the proportion of suicides instead of being a trifle, would be an enormous majority. In this respect it is much more than probable that the candid confession of Prof. Huxley,

[1] "Life Everlasting," p. 18.

in his letter to Mr. J. Morley, is what the average man feels dimly and the best men and women ever feel most strongly. Said he—

> "It is a curious thing that I find my dislike to the thought of extinction increasing as I get older, and nearer the goal. It flashes across me at all sorts of times with a kind of horror, that in 1900 I shall probably know no more of what is going on, than I did in 1800. I had sooner be in hell a good deal—at any rate in one of the upper circles where the climate and company are not too trying."[1]

2. The conviction—as something more than mere longing—that man does not wholly die at death, has not only been practically universal, so that one may truly say—"belief in a future life is a vital part of the experience of mankind," but it has been most earnestly held and taught by many of the greatest minds, both ancient and modern. The teachings of Socrates and Plato hereupon, are too well known to need statement. Shakespeare is also too familiar to call for quotation. But not every one knows that Goethe, Germany's greatest intellect, expressed himself so strongly :—

> "At the age of seventy-five one must of course think sometimes of death. But the thought never gives me the least uneasiness, for I am fully convinced that our spirit is a being of a nature quite indestructible, and that its activity continues from eternity to eternity."

Volumes could be filled with such testimonies. They do not amount to a proof of immortality ; but they do show that if it is a delusion, it is a colossal one.

[1] "Life and Letters," Vol. II, p. 67.

3. Leaving poetry and intuition, so as to give full heed to modern science, it must be plainly affirmed that inasmuch as we do not know what life is, we cannot possibly know what its opposite, death, is or does. All that the most exact modern science permits us to say about life, is, that it is "the power which directs the movements of bioplasm". Or, in Sir Oliver Lodge's deliberate words of affirmation, "Life is something outside the scheme of mechanics, outside the categories of matter and energy, though it can nevertheless control or direct material forces".[1]

Even Prof. Haeckel has to admit that "structures are not the efficient causes of the life process, but products of it". That being so, and all we know of death being that it is the cessation of life, we have not advanced a step beyond the position of the writers of "The Unseen Universe," some thirty years ago, when they affirmed that "none of us know anything whatever about death". In such case, there is plainly no warrant whatever for affirming that it is necessarily the end of the existence of the individual.

4. The assertion of materialism, or Haeckel's monism, that the human self, or soul, or ego, is nothing more than a development from the body, the product of complex organization, the "function of the phronema," will not bear scientific scrutiny. Of personality we may and must say that it is the bed-rock, or ultimate reality, of human existence. But no subtlety of speech, or thought, can make this self to be a material entity, or derive its reality from the material brain. James Mill was quite warranted in the declaration that no man has any right to say that he has seen his brother when he meets him in the street. He has seen a body, a material form,

[1] "Life and Matter," cheap edition, p. 78.

and nothing more. But there is something more, or else one body would never be aware of the existence of another body. In short, the human self, or spirit, or personality, is both real and spiritual, as distinct from material. Seeing, then, that all we know about death is that it is the dissolution of the body, there is no warrant whatever for assuming that it is also the destruction of the soul. One might as well insist that the destruction of Kubelik's violin would involve the annihilation of Kubelik.

5. Some years ago, when materialism was in its heyday, Dr. Joseph Cook of Boston openly declared—

> "Show me by physiological argument that the soul is an agent external to the mechanism of the nervous system, and you have proved that the relation of the soul to the body is that of a harper to a harp, or a rower to a boat. And in showing that, you have removed, I affirm, not only a great but the greatest obstacle to the belief in immortality."

Such an affirmation is more fully justified now than it was then. For more exact physiological research, confirmed by psychology and metaphysics, has made more clear and sure than ever the basis of Dr. Cook's assertion. The last word of expert physiology is to this effect:—

> "We have definitely concluded, then, that the facts both of brain anatomy and of brain physiology, indicate that this organ of the personality is never more than its instrument, whilst the personality itself is as different and as separate from it, as the violinist is separate from and not the product of his violin." [1]

[1] "Brain and Personality," Dr. W. H. Thomson, p. 234.

All we know of death is that it is the dissolution and disintegration of the body, including the brain. But that no argument whatever can be drawn from such physical dissolution to the cessation of the personality, is manifest from a twofold consideration. We know not only that the brain is not the mind, or self; but that there is no apprehensible connexion at all between the brain and the mind. The ultimate finding of psychological physiology is what is termed "psycho-physical parallelism".[1] But this distinctly acknowledges two separate series of phenomena, mental and physical, material and immaterial, running on lines as parallel indeed, but also as separate, as two trains on distinct lines of metal. The reader of these words is thus performing every moment, a veritable miracle of transformation, before which science is absolutely dumb. For all that is presented to his vision is a series of black marks on white paper—whereby another series of molecular vibrations is set up in his cerebral cortex. But these vibrations are no more ideas than the moon is. It is the thinking self which transforms such material shakes into immaterial thoughts. In so doing it is as distinct from the apparatus of optic nerves and cerebral convolutions, as the manipulator of the "monotype" printing machine is from that upon which he operates. Nay, more so. For the connexion between the manipulator and the monotype is both causal and demonstrable. But neither of these can be affirmed of the relation between molecular vibration in the cerebral cortex, and the perception of ideas or formation of resolutions. The destruction of the brain is, therefore, no more proof of the end of the self, than the destruction of the monotype would mean that the operator was dead.

[1] See Dr. Stout's "Manual of Psychology," chap. III. "Body and Mind".

6. If human existence is to have any meaning above and beyond the mere fact of physical existence, it seems impossible to regard the present life as final; its incompleteness is at once so manifest and so tragic. It is hard, indeed, as Mr. Fiske says, to believe that nature will put us to "permanent intellectual confusion" by trampling upon all that is best within men, as of no account, or casting as "rubbish to the void" all that distinguishes man's nature from that of the beasts below him. When one thinks of human nature's wondrous scope, and estimates it, as in this case we are bound to do, by its best specimens, it is surely impossible to think that its capacities shall have no further chance of developing than the few years of life on this earth afford. As Principal Caird put it:—

> "Man's intellectual and moral endowments are on a scale immeasurably larger than the needs of this brief life demand, or than is required for any attainments in knowledge and goodness which even the noblest and best of men reach in their earthly existence; and therefore we can only account for the disproportion by the conception of a future life in which these endowments shall find adequate scope and employment."[1]

One might as well be asked to believe that a magnificent organ, with a hundred stops, was erected just to play on it the Old Hundredth with one finger, as to think that man's possibilities of self-realization are exhausted in this little mortal life. The reason undoubtedly why many well-known words of Tennyson's noblest poem have been so often quoted, is that they so truly express, with tender strength, the

[1] "Fundamental Ideas of Christianity," II. p. 263.

most inextinguishable and surely the noblest longing of humanity :—

> The wish that of the living whole,
> No life shall fail beyond the grave,
> Derives it not from what we have,
> The likest God within the soul ?

From the standpoint of nature alone how can less be said than this :—

> And he, shall he,
>
> Man, her last work, who seemed so fair,
> Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
> Who rolled the psalm to wintry skies,
> And built him fanes of fruitless prayer.
>
> Who loved, who suffered countless ills,
> Who battled for the true, the just ;
> Be blown about the desert dust,
> Or sealed within the iron hills,
>
> No more ? A monster then, a dream,
> A discord ; dragons of the prime,
> That tear each other in their slime,
> Were mellow music matched with him.

7. Nor is this quenchless yearning to be loftily dismissed by "thanatists," on the ground that it is "only poetry". Poetry can on occasion be an iron hand in a velvet glove. It is very far from being a synonym for feebleness. In the present case, its light is rather intensified than dimmed when we turn to modern science. The latest expression of this, we know, is in the word evolution. But if anything be beyond controversy in the vast realm of thought which this term suggests, surely it is that (i) evolution stands for an immeasurably long process upwards, in the sense of advancing from the simpler to the more complex, from the lower to the higher. And (ii), that the highest, crowning result of that process is not only human nature, but human nature at its best. So far, then, as we now know, the

end is the true and only explanation of the beginning. But is this the end of all? In Mr. Fiske's words, as a pronounced evolutionist:—

> "The question then is reduced to this: are man's highest spiritual qualities into the production of which all this creative energy has gone, to disappear with the rest? Has all this work been done for nothing? Is it all ephemeral, all a bubble that bursts, a vision that fades? On such a view, the riddle of the universe becomes a riddle without a meaning. The more thoroughly we comprehend that process of evolution by which all things have come to be what they are, the more we are likely to feel that to deny the everlasting permanence of the spiritual element in man, is to rob the whole process of its meaning." [1]

If human individuality perishes at death, then the whole race in a few years—few as geologic time goes—will be reduced to a clutched soap bubble; and the entire process of development, from the primordial nebulosity to Shakespeare, Gladstone, Jesus Christ, will have counted for no more than the striking of a match to light a city arab's pilfered cigarette. In such case naturalism and pessimism are one.

8. When proof is demanded, prior to any belief in immortality, it is only necessary to apprehend the full significance of the term, to see how unreasonable is such an expectation. Mere continuity of existence is by no means all that is intended, but manifestly, by how much a future after death may be expected to exceed the experience of a life "cribbed, cabined, and confined" as this is by bodily limitations, by so much is it naturally impossible to pre-

[1] "Man's Destiny," pp. 114, 115.

sent any clear conception, let alone demonstration of it. The caterpillar might as reasonably be asked for proof of its future wings, as human thought for demonstration of a larger non-cerebral existence. But on such impossibility, to found an argument against the reality of any such existence would be tantamount to affirming that no winged insect could ever possibly come from a crawling caterpillar. Unless we had seen it, who could have believed it? But when we have seen that the wonderful and beautiful dragon-fly, with its four and twenty thousand eyes and gauzy, iridescent, flashing wings, has emerged from its unpromising larval condition through development under water in the mud, it does not use up much faith to regard death as but the introduction of man—the immeasurably higher creature—to a correspondingly broader, brighter, stage of existence. We may at least say, with some confidence, that the great principle of evolution not only prevents our being content to think that for man death ends all, but encourages the hope that beyond the purview of science there are possibilities of a further post-mortem existence, as much nobler than the human present as humanity itself is than the lower evolutionary stages through which it has already passed.

9. At the same time it is by no means irrelevant or unworthy that some regard should be paid to certain apparent proofs that, at all events, death is not the end of the individual existence. The case is well put, with an admixture of caution and candour, by Dr. McTaggart:—

> "Now the death of the body is by far the strongest reason that we have for doubting the self's immortality. And if the appearance of ghosts could prove that this reason had no weight, they would have removed the greatest difficulty in the way of the belief. Much of the

> evidence offered on this subject is doubtless utterly untrustworthy. But there is a good deal which investigation has failed to break down. And there is much to be said in support of the view that after all deductions have been made for fraud, error, and coincidence, there is still a sufficient residuum to justify the belief that such apparitions are in some cases due to the action of the dead man whose body they represent."[1]

From such a quarter this verdict is so significant, that it may well be taken as the minimum which is consistent with the facts, when they are fairly scrutinized.

10. But inasmuch as the same writer still hesitates to accept the evidence, and only ventures upon the hope that "investigation may give us more evidence incompatible with any theory except that of survival," it would seem that the time has come definitely to claim that such evidence is now forthcoming, on the ground of the thorough, patient, persistent, investigations of the Society for Psychical Research, during the last twenty years. Inasmuch as such testimony is yet open to hasty and superficial, if not contemptuous, dismissal by those who have never looked into it, the following deliberate utterances from those who have, may be of service to the truth. Sir Oliver Lodge, after modestly expressing a truly scientific experience thus—

> "It so happens that I have been engaged for over forty years in mathematical and physical science, and for more than half that period in exploration into unusual psychical development as opportunity arose; and I have thus been led to certain tentative conclusions respecting permissible ways of regarding the universe"—

[1] "Some Dogmas of Religion," p. 106.

gives his deliberate judgement, as already quoted above,[1]

> "I have at length, quite gradually, become convinced, after more than twenty years of study, not only that persistent individual existence is a fact, but that occasional communication across the chasm—with difficulty and under definite conditions—is possible."

If any better qualified expert in such studies could be found, possibly it might be Dr. Hodgson, well-known for his exposure of the Blavatsky frauds in India. Yet Prof. Barrett tells us concerning him that—

> "Dr. Hodgson began his investigation of Mrs. Piper's trance utterances as a thorough sceptic. But after many years of unremitting and critical investigation, testing one hypothesis after another, he was finally driven to the conclusion that the chief communicators are veritably the personalities they claim to be, and that they have survived the change which we call death. Dr. Hodgson's opinion, it may be added, is now shared by many other able inquirers who have made a searching and impartial investigation of the evidence which has accumulated since his death."[2]

Other witnesses, however, might be called, of such character and in such abundance[3] that it is not too

[1] See p. 122.

[2] "Psychical Research," by W. F. Barrett, F.R.S. (Williams and Norgate). This little volume is an admirable summary which merits the attention of every earnest thinker.

[3] The literature of the subject is indeed immense, but it may suffice here to mention two only in addition to the above, viz. "Is Death the End?" by a well-known writer who preserves his anonymity (F. Griffiths) and "New Light on Immortality," by E. Fournier d'Albe (Longmans). In regard to such works nothing is easier than

much to say, with all Sir Oliver's caution and deliberation, that Dr. McTaggart's caveat has been met, and "evidence incompatible with any theory except that of survival," is indubitably to hand. In one plain word, materialism, including "thanatism," is for ever exploded by fact. Death is proved, at the very least, not to be the end of all for human beings.

What has science or philosophy to say against human immortality?

1. Dr. McTaggart remarks truly that the strongest reason for questioning the immortality of the self, is the death of the body. This is the difficulty which has to be frankly faced. As he points out, there are three questions to be answered. (i) Is my present self an activity of my body? (ii) Is my present body an essential condition of the existence of myself? (iii) Is there any reason for thinking that my self does not share the transitory character of the material phenomena around me?

Elaborate discussion will be found elsewhere in justification of the plain replies which must summarily, though truthfully, here be given to these crucial questions. As to the first; my self is not an activity of my body. In regard to the second; all that the facts of the case support is, that "while the self has or dwells in a body, that body is essentially

for the orthodox reviewer (as in the "British Weekly") to write: "Non tali auxilio, the Christian believer may say, as he reads. His faith in eternal life and glory will find allies, let us hope, in another environment than that of extinguished gas and blue magnesium lights." But such a sneer is as unworthy as it is ignorantly unfair. On such lines, Christianity would never have even begun to be. To all such reviewers any fair-minded student may commend the example of the Bereans, and the Apostolic maxim—"whatsoever things are true, take them all into account". Psychical research is no more a mere matter of "blue magnesium lights," than Christianity is a concoction of ecclesiastical miracles.

connected with the self's mental life". As to the third; the difference between the self and the matter with which it is connected, whether more or less intimately, is so great as to preclude all analogy, let alone comparison. In such a case, the material and the immaterial are incommensurable, and no conclusion from the transitoriness of the former can be drawn to that of the latter.

2. There need be no hesitation, therefore, in dismissing as unworthy of regard, the confident dogmatisms of the Haeckelian school, of which the following are typical specimens:—

> "The belief in the immortality of the human soul is a dogma which is in hopeless contradiction with the most solid empirical truths of modern science. . . . We have to say the same of athanatism as of theism, both are creations of poetic mysticism and of transcendental faith, not of rational science.[1] . . . Modern psychology, physiology, ontogeny, phylogeny rigorously refuse an inch of ground for athanatism. Modern science has not taught us a single fact that points to the existence of an immaterial world. . . . Comparative anatomy and physiology have shown that the mind of man is a function of the brain and his will is not free, and that his soul, absolutely bound up with its material organ, passes away at death like the souls of other mammals. All that comes within the range of our knowledge, is a part of the material world."[2]

All these bold assertions are demonstrably false.[3] They would not indeed be worth quoting for denial, were it not for the fact that their dogmatic reiteration

[1] "Riddle of the Universe," cheap edition, pp. 72, 75.
[2] "Wonders of Life," pp. 113, 454.
[3] See for reasons, my "Haeckel's Monism False," ch. VI.

still gives them vogue amongst a large number of people in our midst, who, not knowing better, accept strong assertion as argument. "Modern Science" teaches nothing of the kind.

3. The strongest apparent argument that materialistic science can bring against the post-mortem persistence of the self, is, that "throughout the animal kingdom we never see sensation, perception, instinct, volition, reasoning, or any of the phenomena which we distinguish as mental, manifested, except in connexion with nerve matter arranged in systems of various degrees of complexity".[1] It is true. But what does it all amount to, when soberly considered? Again in Mr. Fiske's words, "Nothing. Absolutely nothing. It not only fails to disprove the validity of the belief, but it does not raise even the slightest *prima facie* presumption against it." At most it can only apply to the present, whereas it is the future with which we are herein concerned. But even that cannot now be conceded. For telepathy has defin-

[1] When Haeckel's eager translator asserts in this case that "there is exact correspondence between brain action and soul life" ("Haeckel's Critics Answered," p. 63) he manifestly concedes the absolute distinction between the two. "Soul life" is thus a reality in itself, for there can only be "correspondence" between entities. The dissolution of one of these is no proof whatever of the destruction of the other. But how hardly pressed such advocates are, may be gathered from what follows: "This correspondence is the same as we find in the case of the heart and its function, the stomach and digestion, or the lungs and respiration". For full exposition of this hackneyed fallacy, see Dr. Stout's "Manual of Psychology," chap. III. But the merest tyro can see the falsity of the suggested analogy. Heart and lungs produce motion, stomach manufactures digested food; therefore brain manufactures consciousness, thought, emotion, will! Of a truth Mr. Fiske may well say that "the materialistic assumption that there is no thought and feeling in the absence of a cerebrum, and that the life of the soul accordingly ends with the life of the body, is perhaps the most colossal assumption known to the history of philosophy".

itely shown that it is *not* always true, even for the present.

4. But, say some—as if it were so relevant as to be conclusive—"When does the immortal soul of the individual come into existence?" The query is really so irrelevant as to be not worth answering. The fact that no physiology or psychology can enable us to fix a momentary birth for the individual self or soul, no more affects its after-death persistence, than the corresponding fact that no moment can be specified as the beginning of self-consciousness, lessens the actuality of my knowledge at this moment that I am I.

5. But we are further assured that the "correspondence between brain action and soul life is just the same in man as in the ape or the dog". If the self in man is undying, why not also in all animals? The answer may be plain and direct. The statement that "soul life" in man and beast is "just the same," is false. It is nothing of the kind. Prof. Haeckel's suggestion that any one who keeps a fine dog "will have to admit that it has just as valid a claim to immortality as man himself," is so utterly contrary to fact, that any one who will may be called upon to try the experiment.[1] The more thoroughly it is done, the more immeasurable becomes the difference. Mr. Fiske's strong summary is the truth :—

> "It is not too much to say that the difference between man and all other living creatures, in respect of teachableness, progressiveness, and individuality of character, surpasses all other differences of kind that are known to exist in the universe."[2]

[1] As I have done for many years.

[2] "Man's Destiny," p. 57. The whole little book should be read by way of appreciating this estimate.

When, therefore, it is affirmed that "if belief in immortality is to be anything more than a despairing trust, it must appeal to the presence in man of some unique power and promise,"[1] the challenge may be most unhesitatingly taken up. For if there be one thing which, next to our own consciousness, is indubitable, certainly it is that, so far as we know anything about the universe, man is inexpressibly and unapproachably unique, alike in power and in promise, throughout the whole realm of nature.

6. In spite of all arguments, however, says Dr. McTaggart, the idea that the self cannot be immortal, continually returns to us. May be. "Yet," he adds, "I think that reasons for the belief in immortality may be found, of such strength that they should prevail over all difficulties." A thoughtful mind will echo this conclusion all the more earnestly for remembering how difficult it would have been a century ago to believe in some things which now no one can deny. Had it been told to Nelson, for instance, that he might in case of need summon to his side ships from across the ocean by wireless message from his masthead, it would have seemed an idle tale in very deed. "Monstrous," "absurd," "impossible," would not have been deemed too strong epithets to employ. Some years later, when railways were initiated, it was proclaimed impossible that any locomotive could ever safely draw a train at twenty miles an hour. What has happened since then? Overwhelmingly enough, in all realms of modern knowledge, to prove that "Believing where we cannot prove" is often much more than trustful poetry; it is valid science.[2]

What, then, is the resultant conviction from the

[1] "Haeckel's Critics Answered," p. 61.
[2] "Some Dogmas, etc.," pp. 110, 111.

pros and *cons* of science and philosophy in regard to human immortality?

It is useful sometimes to summarize a position in plain statement, leaving for other occasions the usual buttressing of assertion with argument. So here, with a full sense of responsibility, the following affirmations may be made in the fiercest light of our present-day knowledge.

(1) The oracular omniscience which characterizes some of the opposition to a belief in immortality, may be dismissed without hesitation as irrational. When we are told that—

> "The world has grown into a universe to-day, and from end to end of it comes only the whisper of death. Man now sees in the universe at large no shadow of support for that promise of unending life he has entertained so long"—[1]

it is almost impossible in courteous language to characterize faithfully such audacious rhodomontade. It is simply untrue, and there we may leave it.

(2) As in all other matters, so here, "our knowledge is a drop, our ignorance a sea". Says Mr. R. B. Arnold, "A being small enough to swim up the blood vessels of our brains, could never have the faintest conception that the atomic activities around him, when totalized, are mind". In very deed he could not; because no number or quantity of "atomic activities" ever yet made "mind" when added together. Nor ever will. But the infinitesimal being here supposed, would only be on a par with our modern iconoclast, if he roundly declared that "from end to end" of the vascular system around him, came only the whisper of mindlessness.

(3) Ignorance of method, or detail, as to a future after death, can never be a final barrier to belief,

[1] "Haeckel's Critics Answered," p. 61.

because it applies equally to present experience which cannot be denied. Mr. Herbert Spencer truly said "You cannot take up any problem in physics without being quickly led to some metaphysical problem which you can neither solve nor evade".

(4) But some things we do know. We know that thought is not a function of brain. It is indeed an accomplished expert who tells us that the more we study the anatomy of the brain cortex, the less we can believe that its cells have anything to do with the mental processes, beyond serving as agents of transmission.[1] The dogmatic assertion, therefore, that the life of the soul ends with the body, when no known physical connexion whatever exists between them, is but an unwarranted and intolerable assumption.

(5) Whilst it is true that the accepted theory of psycho-physical parallelism does not prove the continuity of the self's existence after death, it does at least insist that the door of possibility shall be left open. It takes away the only objection to belief in such continuity which could be fatal and final.

(6) From the standpoint of evolution, "there is no more philosophical difficulty in man's acquiring immortal life, than in his acquiring the erect posture or the faculty of articulate speech".[2]

(7) Endlessness of existence no more needs proof than admits of it. What may be in store for the human self beyond death, or what may then threaten its continuity, we cannot conceive. All we know is that death seems to put an end to human individuality. The question of questions for us is whether such seeming amounts to reality.

[1] Dr. Alexander Hill, late Master of Downing College, Cambridge.
[2] Mr. J. Fiske, "Life Everlasting," p. 85.

(8) It is not too soon, nor too much, to claim that that question is answered, as above indicated. The evidence of direct psychical research, herein, is at once valuable and sufficient. Enough has been demonstrated to give the *coup de grâce* to materialism, and put an end to its blatant dogmatism for evermore. Telepathy is a fact. As such, it blows to the moons of Jupiter the tyrannic fallacies which have appeared to block the way to any hope for the hereafter. Plain fact, no less than physiological psychology, shows that the brain is not the mind,[1] and thought is not the automatic "function of the phronema".[2]

(9) In a word, "athanatism" is proved by facts. But athanatism is not enough to satisfy the human mind or heart. As Prof. Barrett well says in his admirable summary of the results of psychical research :—

> "But does the evidence afford us proof of immortality? Obviously it cannot; nor can any investigations yield scientific proof of that larger, higher and enduring life which we desire and mean by immortality. Our own limitations, in fact, make it impossible for the evidence to convey the assurance that we are communicating with what is best and noblest in those who have passed into the unseen."[3]

(10) It is something, however, and a very great and valuable something, to find that modern science does not forbid our listening for other voices that may speak more clearly and fully to our hearts. It not only imposes no veto upon our longing for reunion with those that have gone before, and has

[1] As "Not Guilty," by Mr. R. Blatchford, affirms, p. 95.
[2] As asserted by Prof. Haeckel, and his translator.
[3] pp. 245, 246.

nothing to say against our normal shrinking from annihilation, but it dismisses as unwarrantable and pessimistic conceit, all talk about only "a whisper of death" coming "from end to end of the universe". It unmistakably holds open the door of hope to other and more enheartening possibilities. The poet's protest is thus amply justified :—

> My own dim life shall teach me this,
> That life shall live for evermore.
> Else earth is darkness at the core,
> And dust and ashes all that is.

WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF IMMORTALITY?

"Our conception of immortality has filtered down to us through the dark ages. It is still tainted by their narrowness of outlook, their lack of scientific knowledge, their opposition of the natural to the supernatural, and we can hardly be surprised that it fails to satisfy or to attract a generation before which such amazing vistas of the universe have opened out.

"Mark has it 'to be cast into hell where their worm dieth not'. True; at the same time it is wholly misleading, and even absurd, to take such sayings of our Lord as these and presume to define their meaning apart from His whole revelation. We cannot understand the significance of any part of Christ's teaching, if we isolate it."—E. MARIE CAILLARD.

"Nearly all the 'higher' views of future existence assume a much greater effect of Divine ruling in the next world than in this. God is more visible, more approachable, more supreme there than here. For this, again, we have no warrant of any kind. A world outside of God is unthinkable. It would simply be another God, and there is no room for two universal centres in a thinkable universe."

—E. FOURNIER D'ALBE, "New Light on Immortality".

"The Bible does not teach expressly the natural immortality of the soul in the sense in which philosophers have sought to demonstrate it, but neither does it teach that only those who believe in Christ survive death. There is solemn warning to the wicked of a penalty which awaits them in the future life. The view of man which is distinctive of Christianity, the worth which it assigns to him, the solicitude on his behalf which it ascribes to God, all suggest that even in the sinner death does not end all, but that the moral and religious development here begun is completed in the hereafter."—Dr. GARVIE, "Christian Life and Belief".

"Since departing souls are carrying evil into the unseen world, we cannot fail to see that in that world the question of God's victory over evil must be wrought out. God changes never. In that unseen realm of life He is the same as here; or rather in this little world He is the same that He for ever is in the infinite realm of being—the lover of souls and the hater of sin."

—Dr. W. N. CLARKE, "The Christian Doctrine of God".

"Hymns are responsible for a great deal of our foolish ideas on religion. Those who undertake work in this department should strive to make our hymnody a little more sensible, and a little more poetic.

"Now what has brought about this foolish idea of death as a long sleep until a far-off resurrection day? Chiefly two things. First, an unthinking interpretation of the word 'sleep' as applied to death by our Lord; and secondly, the idea of a far-off day of judgement—a great world assize. The idea is quite unthinkable.

"To be quite fair, it must be sorrowfully admitted that Protestantism has presented pictures of Hell, not perhaps so awful in a material sense, but with that exception as awful as those of Rome. The marvel is that Christianity should have survived such cruel and awful misrepresentations. But they have made its progress in the world immensely slower, and what is still worse, they have to multitudes shadowed the fair face of a God declared by His Son to be love itself."

—W. GARRETT HORDER, "The Other World".

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF IMMORTALITY?

It is well indeed that the sweeping dogmatisms of materialism should be rebuked by modern science, and it is gain for evermore if valid evidence is to hand—no matter whence—that the dead are not lost, but only gone before. But the craving of the human mind and heart is so natural and so insistent for further knowledge on this great theme, that when science and philosophy have had their say, religion also may well be called upon for its verdict. In general, it may be assumed that religion is pledged to immortality. For whilst Islam is as uncompromising as sensuous in its post-mortem promise, Buddhism strenuously insists that its Nirvana is not annihilation, and Hinduism is quite content with its transmigrations, in which attitude it is vividly followed by modern Theosophy. We shall, however, concern ourselves here only with the Christian religion, as being, at least nominally, that of the Western world. Considerable stress has been laid in the preceding section—probably more than those who have not studied the subject will appreciate—on the ultimate findings of the Society for Psychical Research. But it is equally important not to overrate, any more than underrate, its witness. Prof. Barrett's conclusion to his useful summary already mentioned, is at once true and suggestive :—

> "In fine, psychical research, though it may strengthen the foundations cannot take the place

> of religion, using in its widest sense that much-abused word. For, after all, it deals with the external, though it be in an unseen world; and its chief value lies in the fulfilment of its work whereby it reveals to us the inadequacy of the external, either here or hereafter, to satisfy the life of the soul. The physical order is not the spiritual order, but a stepping stone in the ascent of the soul to its own self-apprehension, its conscious sharing in the eternal Divine life."

So that we may come back once more to the truth that God, freedom, and immortality are inseparable, and ask afresh what is the bearing of the two former upon the latter?

1. From the Christian standpoint unquestionably, both theism and moral responsibility are, as has been stated, postulates. How definitely these point on to a life to come, needs no labour of words to show. The most remarkable position in modern philosophy was undoubtedly that of Kant, who did not shrink from basing his argument for the very being of God upon the assumption that immortality was an inevitable postulate of the pure practical reason. To him the *summum bonum* of human life was the complete accordance of the mind with the perfect moral law. This, however, implied an eternal progression which could only be possible in a literal eternity. But the necessary condition of the possibility of such an eternal progression is the existence of an adequate cause, i.e. of God. It is easier to disregard this argument than to disprove it; but we are here only concerned to mark well the inseparability of the three great factors which constitute the very essence of Christianity.

2. For theism, as a genuine necessity of thought, no apology need be offered. Such superficial dogmatisms as that of Prof. Haeckel, that "an unpre-

judiced study of natural phenomena reveals the futility of the theistic idea"; and of his English representative, that "God has now shrunk into an intangible cosmic principle," may be as lightly dismissed as they are assuredly unwarranted. It will suffice to say with Mr. A. J. Balfour :—

> "The ordered system of phenomena asks for a cause. Our knowledge of that system is inexplicable unless we assume for it a rational Author. Under this head, at least, there should be no conflict between science and religion."

Accepting, as now we must, evolution as the Divine method of creation, its bearing upon the question of immortality is manifest and impressive.

The wider teleology which it involves means, as Huxley so plainly pointed out, not less but more of design on the part of the Creator, and warrants our utmost appreciation of it. But in so doing it becomes unquestionable that the explanation of the beginning is in the end ; just as surely as an architect's plans are explained and justified by the noble edifice which results from following them. So is man the explanation of protoplasm, not protoplasm of man. If, then, man, as the veritable incarnation and embodiment of the great Creator's intention, ends absolutely in nothing, not only is the impersonal process of evolution a self-contradictory enigma, but the sublime Personal Author of the age-long process is made to act with a futility which, amongst men, would only be attributed to an imbecile. Hence Mr. Fiske says truly, from the standpoint of theism :—

> "He who regards man as the consummate fruition of creative energy, and the chief object of Divine care, is almost irresistibly driven to the belief that the soul's career is not completed with the present life upon the earth. For my

> own part, therefore, I believe in the immortality of the soul, not in the sense in which I accept the demonstrable truths of science, but as a supreme act of faith in the reasonableness of God's work." [1]

Well, therefore, does the same author ask—"Are we to regard the Creator's work as like that of a child who builds houses out of blocks, just for the pleasure of knocking them down?" Surely the conception of Mephistopheles, as told to Faust, is too ghastly to be true :—

> "And man gave God thanks for the strength that had enabled him to forego even the joys that were possible. And God smiled; and when he saw that man had become perfect in renunciation and worship, he sent another sun through the sky which crashed into man's sun and all returned again to nebula. 'Yes,' God murmured, 'it was a good play; I will have it performed again.'"

Rather must we fall back upon the witness of an Agnostic as candid as Huxley, who in his "Life and Letters," definitely declares—

> "I am no optimist, but I have the firmest belief that the Divine government (if we may use such a phrase to express the sum of the customs of matter) is wholly just. The absolute justice of the system of things is as clear to me as any scientific fact." [2]

It cannot be other than just to fulfil a Divinely implanted expectation. It would be more than unjust to cause such a development of humanity as must lead to desires, affections, longings, more deep and

[1] "The Destiny of Man," pp. 111, 116.
[2] "Life and Letters," vol. I, p. 236.

strong and high and tender than any preceding animal could ever share, only to consummate them with annihilation. As Emerson said :—

> "The Creator keeps His word with us all. What I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for what I have not seen. Will you, with vast pains and care, educate your children to produce a masterpiece, and then shoot them down?"

3. Certainly this reference to the relation of parent and child is entirely warranted from the Christian standpoint. Christian theism unmistakably involves the reality of the Divine and universal Fatherhood. The only possible objection to this is that it is too good to be true. Assuming that this has been sufficiently considered in the preceding sections, if God be, as Christian theism asserts, a Heavenly Father, it is simply impossible for us to think of Him as content to watch an eternal funeral—the passing into nothingness of untold generations of His children. If man here is a worthy object of love Divine, his annihilation by the law of a God of love is inconceivable. If the eternal purpose of the Father has through measureless ages brought to pass his creation, his total destruction by death could not but be a frustration and contradiction of that purpose such as no earthly father would tolerate. When a human father brings up a child with ceaseless love and pains from babyhood to manhood or womanhood, and then disease or accident ends the promising career, it is universally regarded as a calamity which is only tolerable because resistless. If God be God, and also in any sense a Father, we cannot think of Him as either unwilling or unable to prevent such irreparable loss on the larger scale.

4. But more than that. From our human stand-

point, no less than from the Divine, if the Fatherhood of God be anything more than a pious and pitiful fiction, there must be some other sphere than this present life for the manifestation not merely of the justice but of the loving sympathy which are inseparable from fatherhood. Beyond question the greatest difficulty to many thoughtful and sincere minds, in regard to the Christian doctrine of Divine Fatherhood, is found in the gross inequalities between the capacities and opportunities, the joys and sorrows, the luxury and penury, the unmerited happiness or unhappiness of human beings. Unless a man can satisfy his mind with the muddled shifts of "reincarnation," as urged by Theosophy, he is bound to ask that somehow, somewhere, in some way, a more fair and impartial scheme of things shall be inaugurated. The story of Dives and Lazarus may be but metaphorical, none the less it involves such eternal principles of justice and sympathy as cannot possibly be ignored, if any Divine government, let alone Fatherhood, is to be maintained. "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things and likewise Lazarus evil things. But now, here, he is being comforted, and thou art in anguish." What they deserve who in this life have had every boon it can offer, and squandered it all in brutal selfishness, may be beyond our judgement. But our hearts refuse to be silenced when we cry out against the undeserved pangs of myriads of helpless sufferers who, through no fault of their own, have been "damned into the world" to start with, and thenceforward have never had a chance to make life, in any noble human sense, worth living. That there are myriads such, even in modern civilization, cannot, alas! be questioned.

If a mere mindless energy, working through chance or blind "necessity," rules the universe—well, there

is no more to be said. Confusion is only what might be expected. But Divine Fatherhood cannot contemplate such a moral chaos with indifference. Whatever becomes of our theologies, or our conventions, these unfortunates must all have their share in good—if not here, then hereafter. They cannot be permitted by a God whose "love is as great as His power," to be born with human capacities for enjoyment no less than for suffering, only to endure anguish and then cease to be. Such blighted human beings would be blots for ever upon the love of God, if there were no other existence in which the compensation provided for Lazarus came also to every innocent sufferer. Such assured compensation hereafter is, indeed, no excuse whatever for moral *laissez-faire* here and now. Nor does it involve any warrant whatever for diminishing our present efforts towards justice and sympathy to the uttermost. But when these fail through no fault of ours, it is unspeakable comfort to know that all is not over. Those whom we would have helped and could not, have not plunged headforemost into the "vacant jaws of darkness," but have gone to "Abraham's bosom". Such a figure may be taken to signify at least a blended fatherhood and motherhood more tender and sufficing than any known here on earth.

5. Yet another call upon the Divine Fatherhood must be made, so long as its reality is assumed. It must have some relation to the unnumbered hosts of the deaths which we cannot but call "premature," whether they occur in childhood or adolescence. We have seen how Prof. Haeckel waxes very bitter here;[1] and certainly, if this little life were indeed demonstrated to be all, the suggested Nemesis of faith would be difficult to avoid. But the writer wilfully forgets

[1] See p. 49.

that the faith at which he sneers, which dares to speak of a Heavenly Father here, insists just as plainly and earnestly that this life is not the only sphere of His operation. There is thus no fairness in the indictment which separates the two realms, and utterly ignores the greater. Christian belief does not, cannot, profess to find the full manifestation of the Divine Fatherhood in this present stage of being. Christ's own words are homely indeed, but they are as unmistakable as unfathomable when justice is done them.

Alas! that a figure of speech marred by archaic English still minifies and stultifies, for very many, the surest and tenderest word of comfort ever spoken to sorrowing human hearts :—

> "Let not your heart be troubled! Trust in God; trust also in Me. In My Father's house are many resting-places. If it were not so I would have told you."

How long religious obscurantism will cling to the now utterly misleading word "mansions," as in the version of 1611—wrongly called "Authorized"—no one can say. But the hindrance of it is immeasurable, just where the modern mind and heart most need sane suggestions of genuine comfort. Assuredly there is no such comfort as the Christian mind craves, in the suggestion of an endless series of "mansions"—considering the present-day significance of that term. What the heart cries out for is restored communion, perpetuation of love, continuation of unselfish service—all of which legitimately come into the assurance of Jesus, but are blocked out of thought by the repellent archaism to which so many yet appear to be devoutly attached.

We do not need the gibes of unbelief to remind us of the heart-breaking mysteries of those deaths

where everything worth considering calls for more, many more, of such human lives as are thus ended. Here is one typical case, taken from a journal issued whilst these pages are being written.

> "A terribly tragic occurrence took place at Old Trafford on the 10th of November. On the bridge which crosses the Ship Canal, Dr. W. P. Marshall and his wife were walking at the same time that a large motor wagon was crossing. Dr. Marshall stopped for a moment to notice something passing in the canal below, and at that moment the wagon, by reason of the greasy condition of the roadway, skidded and pinned the doctor against the side of the bridge. His injuries were so terrible that he died at Salford Hospital on Monday last. The deceased was the son of Rev. Dr. Marshall, Principal of the Baptist College, Manchester, and six months ago married Miss E. Marshall of Bolton. The latter belongs to one of the oldest and most respected families of the Bridge Street Circuit, and has been brought up at Fletcher Street Chapel."

Before such a tragedy of grief and loss, our hearts stand appalled, and words are useless. It is small comfort in very deed, to know of many other instances of equal mystery and sorrow. Their name is legion.

> Never morning wore
> To evening, but some heart did break.

Whether we think of such inexplicable tragedies as the foregoing, or the even more pathetic deaths of myriads of loved little ones, it is simply impossible to believe in the love of a heavenly Father for us His children, if all these, younger or older, who have been the very embodiments of all that is

Divinest in human nature, are but to pass as worthless trifles into the everlasting dark. If we too, following them with hearts over-charged, sharing the grief that can only spring from love, have no prospect but to be pushed on in turn into oblivion, then not only were it better not to be, but the despair of unbelief which regards the Divine Fatherhood as but "the baseless shadow of a wistful human dream," would be justified. If God be our Father, death cannot be the destruction of our loved ones, nor the charnel-house of all our tenderest, noblest hopes.

6. It will not be of avail here to refer to the testimony of the Bible generally, for the double reason that (i) it could only be authoritative for those who accept its inspiration; and that (ii) the Old Testament throws but little light, and that only uncertainly, upon any life beyond the grave. In the earlier periods of Jewish history, as reflected in our Canon, there was no conception of or reference to eternity at all. A dim hope that it was well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked, in a shadow-land that was called Sheol, was almost all. True, in some of the Psalms there are hints of brighter hopes. Whether these can be traced back to Persian, or Egyptian, or Accadian influences, is irrelevant. Before the time of the Maccabees, the whole case may be truly summed up in the words of Dr. Salmond, to the effect that the Old Testament—"caught but occasional flashes of the light of an after life".[1] In the Apocrypha we first meet those more definite and larger views and hopes which prepare the way for the unmistakable attitude of Christ Himself.

7. So long as the New Testament is held in any regard, its testimony, as embodying that of Christ and His Apostles, is unequivocal and final.

[1] For an excellent summary of the case, see Book Second in his "Christian Doctrine of Immortality".

(i) The teaching of Jesus as to the life after death is, indeed, neither academic nor theological. But it is unquestionably real and unmistakable. No proof is offered; no detail is given; no curious questions are answered. But the actuality of another state of being after death, in definite moral continuity with this present, is never for a moment left in uncertainty. However greatly sections of the Christian Church may have differed, or may yet differ, as to eschatology, no one of them has ever questioned the reality of that after-death continuity of personality which Jesus everywhere and always assumed. For the non-Christian world, of course, such teaching may not be final; but all Christendom, assuredly, will refuse herein to believe Him to have been either deceiver or deceived.

(ii) His character, moreover, becomes a witness in itself. No notice need be taken of the insignificant minority, even in the ranks of unbelief, of those who have attempted to belittle or besmirch that character. He of whom Strauss wrote that "nothing can be added to the moral intuition which Jesus Christ has left us," and concerning whom also Mr. John Stuart Mill declared that even an unbeliever could not "find a better rule of virtue, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve his life," will lose nothing in the estimate of all who are worth considering, by the occasional gibes of a vulgar journalism, or the sneers of some of the coarser representatives of Secularism. His character remains and will ever remain where Mr. Lecky, the eminent "rationalist," put it.[1]

[1] The words have been so often quoted as scarcely to need repetition. In briefest statement, lest any reader should have missed it: "It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love—has been not

In Him, therefore, the incredibility of a Divinely directed but self-frustrated evolution, reaches its unanswerable climax. If it be self-contradictory, even on naturalistic lines, that evolution as a process of the ages should culminate in a creature of man's calibre, and then allow him to become extinct; it is far more incredible that God, who is in the fullest sense the Father of mankind, should express that relationship in an evolutionary purpose which finds its highest and noblest end in a Goethe, or a Shakespeare, or a Gladstone, or a Kelvin, and then suffer these personalities, with all the mystery of their unmeasured potency, to be smitten into extinction by death. But most of all does it become impossible to believe, that He who was in a supreme and unique sense "Son of man" and "Son of God," the moral and spiritual flower of all the ages, could be permitted by a God of wisdom, love, and power, to pass out of being as totally and irrevocably as—to quote Haeckel's simile—"the fly of a summer's day, the microscopic infusorium, or the smallest bacillus". The living Christ is in Himself, now and for evermore, the pledge that death is not the human terminus.

(iii) But the yet stronger and final appeal of the Christian hope of immortality is to fact. Whether the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was a purely "spiritual" event, which left the mangled body to moulder in a Syrian grave; or whether it was so far "physical" as to involve a transformation from the body of his humiliation into a real and glorious though spiritual body, may be left here un-

only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence, that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life, has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists".

decided as irrelevant. The question of questions is did Jesus the Crucified, as a matter of fact, pass on through death into that larger life which He had not only Himself anticipated but definitely promised to those about Him, as the crowning proof of the truthfulness of His whole mission? The Christian answer is, that He did. The validity of the proofs of His reappearing after death, must be discussed elsewhere.[1] Here we are warranted in assuming the fact, and appreciating the consequence. What this greatest of human events has done, and done for evermore, is, in Dr. Salmond's words—"It has translated a guess, a dream, a longing, a probability, into a certainty". It is no mere religious sentiment, but a rational and scientific inference, which is embodied in Gellert's well-known hymn:—

> Jesus lives—thy terrors now,
> Can, O death, no more appal us;
> Jesus lives—by this we know,
> Thou, O grave, can'st not enthral us.

The certainty, which is the final rock of our refuge from waves of doubt concerning death's effect, is that it was not the end of His personality. No more, then, has it been for those who have gone before. Nor will it be so for ourselves. By that assurance, Christianity stands or falls.

(iv) All this, i.e. the unhesitating acceptance of the unshakable reality and the unmeasured consequence of the resurrection of Jesus, was unequivocally endorsed by all the Apostles, and universally

[1] On a theme so important it may be well to mention the following works as being not merely up to date, but sufficient to convince all who are open to conviction: "The Resurrection of our Lord," Prof. Milligan (Macmillan); "Our Lord's Resurrection," W. Sparrow Simpson; also by the same author, "The Resurrection and Modern Thought" (both Longmans); "The Resurrection of Jesus," Dr. Jas. Orr (Hodder and Stoughton); "Studies in the Resurrection," C. H. Robinson (Longmans).

accepted as true, by all the earliest as well as later Christian believers. There were many heresies and divisions in those days, far more than enough to exhibit independence of opinion, and guarantee utter absence of collusion, as between the Churches. But there is no recorded heresy hereupon, because there was no other belief. As to the future, there was in those days room for doubt and mistake. Concerning the promised coming of their Lord, the first disciples had much to unlearn. But the very eagerness of the belief which led to their mistake, was derived from the certainty of their conviction that Jesus was living, not dead; that He had conquered death, and was alive for evermore. Since that time, even until now, believers have gone on meddling with the future which Jesus so plainly bade them let alone. Prophecies without number have been issued, even more false and foolish than those of the first century. But the very pity with which the instructed Christian or non-Christian dismisses them, is a witness to the unbroken continuity and unquestioned assurance of the universal Christian belief in, and hope from, the actuality of the resurrection of Jesus who was crucified. Not merely, therefore, on the authority of His teaching, nor on the unimpeachableness of His character, did their hopes then rest, but on the certainty, made sure by His appearings, that He had passed through death unharmed to fulfil His word—"I go to prepare a place for you".

Concerning such a hope there has never been, and it is quite safe to say that there never will be, any division in Christendom. There is no risk in affirming that it is the most numerously and deeply held religious conviction in the whole history of humanity.[1]

[1] As to the often heard loose talk about the numerical superiority of Buddhism, which is altogether untrue, see "Haeckel's Monism

If, then, this whole belief were but the delusion that modern Naturalism would have us think, it would be at once the most enormous and most pitiful of all that have ever afflicted mankind. But there is no sufficient reason for so regarding it. What we know as the fifteenth chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, remains at once the most unmistakable and noble expression of the Christian hope. When all that it involves—considering the time and circumstances of its writing—is taken into account, it is also a sure pledge of the universal confidence of the Christians of the middle of the very first century, that they had "not followed cunningly devised fables," in believing that Jesus was risen from the dead, never more to die. That inspiring conviction, all the conflicts of the dark ages never lessened, let alone destroyed. The fierce light of our modern knowledge, so far from quenching such a belief, or extinguishing such a hope, is tending more and more to confirm it. Whether we accept, or not, the exact statement of the late F. W. H. Myers, he was at least an impartial and thorough investigator, who speaks for no little modern psychology, quite as truly as Eucken or Bergson for latest philosophy.

> "I venture now on a bold saying; for I predict that in consequence of the new evidence, all reasonable men a century hence, will believe the resurrection of Christ, whereas in default of the new evidence, no reasonable man a century hence would have believed it."

One may doubt the latter clause here, without invalidating the former. In any case his other summary remains true :—

False," pp. 543-5 ; also "Clarion Fallacies," p. 174. Christianity lays no stress upon numbers, but it is time for the truth's sake that this misrepresentation ceased.

> "On a basis of observed facts, Christianity, the youngest of the great types of religion, does assuredly rest. Assuredly those facts so far as tradition has made them known to us, do tend to prove the superhuman character of its Founder, and His triumph over death; and thus the existence and influence of a spiritual world where men's true citizenship lies. These ideas, by common consent, lay at the origin of the faith." [1]

8. It may be well now to summarize the essentials of modern Christian belief, in regard to that life after death concerning the reality of which it permits no doubt.

(i) No phase of Christian doctrine needed, or has undergone, more recent reform, than that generally known as "eschatology". The change which has quietly but unmistakably come to pass during the last fifty years, is indeed immeasurable. No amount of respect for our forefathers must be allowed to prevent our recognizing their mistakes. It is human to err, and assuredly theology has no more been exempt from that principle than science. It is not too much to say—and there are very weighty reasons in these days for saying it—that the doctrines which were formerly accepted and preached in regard to the world to come, illustrated the very worst faults of which theology is capable. They were rigidly built upon a false rock—the theory of verbal inspiration; and were most elaborately constructed upon a false principle—the method of exegesis by means of isolated proof-texts, picked and used without regard to context. Hence assertions were made, and dogmas formulated, which practically assumed both omniscience and infallibility. So that in the name

[1] "Human Personality," Vol. II, pp. 286, 288.

of evangelical religion, horrors of ill and unrealities of good were not only set before men as the very soul of the Gospel of Jesus, but were most positively made the very tests of a standing or falling universal Church.

How markedly that note has ceased to be sounded, almost every pulpit in the land now bears witness. Not even a Spurgeon would be tolerated to-day, if he ventured to repeat some of the things in print which have appeared with his name attached. Traces, indeed, of the same spirit are, not unnaturally, still to be found. Thus an able and eminent theologian writes quite recently, that in thinking and teaching concerning the great hereafter—"We have no right to go beyond the plain and abundant teaching of the sacred Book. To do so is perilous in the extreme." But this "plain" and "abundant," is exactly what, hereupon, "the teaching of the sacred Book" is not. It is certainly not plain; for the very writer of these words was thereupon indicted for heresy by his own Church. On behalf of what he held to be the truth, he set himself directly to face and contradict what numbers of men, quite as able and sincere, have insisted that the Bible definitely teaches. How can the teachings of Scripture be deemed "plain," in view of all the differences of opinion, "heresies" as they have been termed, which devoted and scholarly Christian men have held in regard to them? Nor can they any more truly be pronounced "abundant," seeing that in the Old Testament there is next to nothing definite; that the Apocrypha speaks only dimly of anything beyond the assurance of personal continuity; whilst as to the New Testament, when difficult and uncertain "passages" are withdrawn, there is really very little left to determine any opinion as to those exact details upon which former theologies laid such stress.

Hereupon, Dr. Salmond has done well to emphasize what has been all too generally ignored :—

> "The Christian doctrine has also made the contribution of reserve, where reserve has been most needful and most salutary, the contribution of silence where the conjectures of men have been least restrained and of smallest profit for the practical conduct of life."[1]

It has been in the past not merely "perilous," but mischievous in the extreme, to write and preach as if the whole counsels of eternity had been compressed into a few texts of Scripture and a few strong figures of speech. Especially when these latter were generally made to be misrepresentations, by treating them as literal, and even physical, delineations. Instead, therefore, of its being a downgrade sign of "heterodoxy," the fact that Christian teachers now speak with bated breath where their predecessors shouted with certainty, and are even silent sometimes where formerly men had most to say, is one of the surest indications of the apprehension of reality. The greater modesty of modern belief is a pledge of the deepening, not the enfeebling, of conviction.

(ii) Modern Christian faith in regard to things unseen, is increasingly disposed to act upon the Apostolic ideal—"Whatsoever things are true"—"Prove all things, hold fast that which is good". Whether light comes from science or philosophy, from Spiritism or Theosophy, from apparitions or telepathy, matters not, so long as it is light. It does not follow herefrom that the Christian who takes the New Testament as his standard is necessarily blind or bigoted, narrow or one-eyed, because he does not fall in at once with every modern sugges-

[1] "Christian Doctrine of Immortality," p. 466.

tion. The earnestness and sincerity of many enthusiasts for the new cults with which this age is so liberally supplied, may be conceded. But such an acknowledgment demands a similar concession from those to whom it is granted. Because the Christian believer in real and blessed immortality does not find it possible to accept, say, Dr. McTaggart's views upon pre-existence; or to regard as reasonable Mrs. Besant's fourteen "reasons" for reincarnation; or to take *en bloc* all the alleged instances of "spirit manifestations"; it is not necessarily to be inferred that he is lacking either in intelligence or honesty. "Let every man," well said the Apostle Paul, "be fully convinced in his own mind." All that need here be affirmed is that whilst there may be room for discussion in each of these three directions, genuine Christian faith is independent of any one of them. Until Christian theism is shown to be irrational, it is not necessary to assume an individual's existence without beginning, in order to predicate his continuance without end. All theories of reincarnation are wrecked hopelessly upon the hard fact that there is no conscious, and therefore no personal, continuity. The confused and incoherent mass of alleged "spirit revelations" yield little more of what is reliable, than pitchblende does of radium. Even that residue is useless for anything more than objective demonstration of the simple fact, that death does not end all for human beings.

(iii) Christian belief can never be content either with the bare objectivity of actual personal continuity, such as, on the whole, Sir Oliver Lodge with many others now considers demonstrated; or with the ambiguities and puerilities which, for the most part, characterize spiritistic "revelations"—to say nothing about the undeniable amount of delusion and fraud which has accompanied them. On the

other hand, for all purposes of Christian faith, there is no real reason or need that Scripture teachings should be both "plain and abundant," in the theological sense. They are plain enough and abundant enough to yield main principles of comfort, hope, and duty. With these, in our present state of being, we may well be content. Some wise words of Prof. Eucken are here most pertinent :—

> "From a too great troubling about the future we are, however, especially protected, if we keep clearly in view our complete ignorance of its character. Kant concludes his critique of the practical reason with these words—'Thus what the study of nature and of man teaches us sufficiently elsewhere may well be true here also, that the unsearchable wisdom by which we exist is not less worthy of admiration in what it has denied than in what it has granted'."[1]

9. When the whole testimony of the New Testament, with all that it includes, is taken soberly and thoughtfully, we have all that is necessary for the development of loftiest personal character, and the encouragement of the noblest hopes. The following may stand as a suggestive summary.

(i) Real, conscious, unmistakable, personal continuity, is everywhere and always assumed as beyond question. Whatever may inevitably be obscure beyond the grave, there is no kind or degree of obscurity about the certainty that I shall be I, as surely as I am now; and shall know myself to be such as I have been here. This may be more than enough for the vicious man, but it is the best of good news to every one who here has given his utmost for the highest.

(ii) The retention unchanged, in passing through

[1] "Hibbert Journal," July, 1908, p. 851.

death, of the moral character here wrought out, is unequivocally asserted. As such, it is at once the most solemn warning for the bad, and the most potent inspiration for the good. Nothing can exceed the bliss or woe of the plain principle—"God is not mocked, whatever a man sows, that will he also reap"—as applied to the perpetuation of personality, when death has done all it can to human beings.

(iii) Here we know ourselves not only as finite spirits, but as inseparably associated with and dependent on bodies which constitute most real limitations. The connexion which here so inexplicably but resistlessly exists between soul and body, death dissolves. No more; but no less. Such dissolution must bring with it freedom from our present limitations, whatever others may abide. By so much therefore, will the life to come be larger than the life that now is. That cannot but involve a wider scope and larger potency, upward for the worthy, downward for the unworthy. Such changes may truly be, as Eucken and Kant have hinted, quite inexpressible in the thought or speech of earth. But that is no argument against their reality. According to valid moral principles the paradox is true that personal continuance cannot be mere continuance. For the personality necessarily carries with it the accumulated result of its present working. The momentum of character here developed, is that which starts the larger upward or downward growth hereafter.

(iv) Such self-created impulse for higher good, or baser ill, will be the true and only "day of judgement," as asserted in well-known words of the New Testament.[1]

[1] Say, for instance, the second chapter of Romans, or the fifth of Galatians, etc.

The notion of a universal simultaneous assize, when all those who have ever dwelt upon this planet will be assembled in some incalculably huge mass, is as childish and unnecessary as it is utterly inconceivable when seriously contemplated. It has popularly resulted from the unthinking application of two vicious principles of interpretation which no adult mind can for a moment tolerate. First, the dealing with pictures and figures of speech as literal prose; and secondly, the attempt, as futile as well-intended, to express timeless spiritual realities in concrete terms of the time-measured present. The "day of judgement" has no more to do with a specific time-limited spectacular convulsion, than the "day of trouble" which the Psalmist met with prayer; or the "day" which was ever on the lips of the prophets as the promise of deliverance; or the "day" of Christ which He said Abraham had foreseen. Here, indeed, without quotation, we may affirm that the teaching of Scripture is plain and abundant; but its sober and sensible, as well as solemn, intimations, have been sacrificed to superficial exposition and popular sensationalism. When these are unlearned, it will be seen that there is no need whatever to borrow from Buddhism, or any other source, a doctrine of Karma which shall embody perfect justice. For the Christian law of Karma is quite as real and impressive, though not so frigid and ruthless, as all the threatenings of the East. The Christian hereafter holds no "fate" for any man, save that which he here makes for himself. And if he goes on to make it more dire beyond the grave than here, it will be, according to Christ's principles, not because there is no mercy for him, but because he will not seek, nor therefore find, the mercy that always waits for every man so long as God is God.

(v) More than this, all we are permitted by the

combined utterance and silence of the Christian Scriptures to hold for true, is the inevitable consequence of retained moral personality, viz. the reality and activity of thought, feeling, will. Such retention necessarily includes those powers of choice which can never, in the nature of things, be absent from a moral being. It also implies all those actualities of communion which, in regard to loved ones gone before, our hearts so strenuously demand. But it leaves unanswered most of the questions which so irrepressibly spring up in every mind that seriously contemplates the future. "Lord, will there be few saved?" asked the disciples. But the Master did not answer the query. Nor is it answered for us; any more than the cognate questions as to whether there will be greater or less opportunities of falling or rising; whether such permanence of evil character can here be attained as must make all hope of turning to the good unthinkable; whether in the end

> . . . good shall fall
> At last—far off—at last, to all,
> And every winter change to spring.

All these and kindred queries, however sincerely and reverently propounded, belong to the category of "unspeakable things" such as Paul may, or may not, have distantly seen in the recorded vision which he was not permitted to repeat. This only we know, that all dogmatism as to the finality of human destiny is as unwarranted and unwarrantable as it is unnecessary to Christian truth, or love, or comfort, or duty. "The Father hath committed all judgement to the Son." There we must be content, and ought to be more than content, to leave it. Whenever theology assumes omniscience, it falsifies itself.

10. A few practical inferences from all the fore-

going seem to be called for. The paradox is true, again, that modern Christian faith is growing at once more certain and more uncertain. There is, in regard to the great hereafter towards which we are all helplessly drifting day by day, more certainty than ever in all that we really need to know, more uncertainty in all that is not necessary.

(i) The normal, healthy hope that death does not end all, that individuality is retained, that moral character is not lost, that communion with loved ones already gone, is in store for us—these are to-day more certain than ever. Modern Agnosticism cannot deny them without denying itself, so that its chilly aloofness counts for nothing. Those who boast that they do not know, should be the last to protest against those who affirm that, in any degree, they do know. For the good man this in itself is enough.

> Glory of virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong—
> Nay, but she aimed not at glory, no lover of glory she;
> Give her the glory of going on and still to be.
>
> She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just;
> To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky;
> Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

(ii) The uncertainty as to future judgement, or the ultimate fate of each individual, which no theology can ever relieve, should make all real Christians at once more careful, more charitable, more hopeful, as to the vast host of whom they know little or nothing. Also, more tenderly earnest towards all those who seem to be content with evil, by reason of what we know must be the dire results of persistence in wrong-doing. This is more than sufficient as motive for the utmost zeal in Christian effort, without any thought, let alone reiteration, of the harsh and often ghastly threatenings which used to be called "Gospel appeals".

(iii) In regard to the bright side of the after-death condition—"the state of the blessed dead" as it is termed—there is greater need than ever before that the Christian hope should be expressed truly and worthily, as well as earnestly, whether in sermons, hymns, prayers, writings, or elsewhere. At present, there is far too often no small opportunity for opponents to contemn and deride the whole prospect. Prof. Tyndall's words have an even greater force now than when he uttered them, that—"Theologians must liberate and refine their conceptions; or must be prepared for the rejection of them by thoughtful minds". As regards the matter before us, Flugge wrote most pertinently that—"Assuredly the Christian belief in a future state is capable of and urgently needs elevation, if it is to be regarded as anything more than a popular mythus, and to possess any interest or attraction for cultivated men". This is, one must honestly acknowledge, but a mild putting of the case. Alas! in numberless instances, the "Heaven" to come has been but a thoughtless agglomeration of sensational childishness, utterly intolerable as soon as really contemplated.

For this lamentable marring of the noble and blessed Christian hope, there have been and yet are two main sources, (i) the perversion of the New Testament; and (ii) the publication of popular hymns. As to the former: language which is manifestly and highly figurative has been taken with a crass literalness unworthy of a schoolboy. Especially in regard to the portion which happens to come last, in our arrangement of the Canon of the Christian Scriptures. It is indeed little less than a calamity that the book of "Revelation" does come last in the New Testament as we have it, so gross and mischievous have been the inferences drawn from it. In general, its poetry has been treated as prose; its

figures as concrete physical realities; its contemporary references have been twisted into predictions; and the whole interpretation divorced alike from sound exegesis and from common sense. This kind of treatment has naturally resulted in such a representation of Heaven and Hell, following upon an utterly impossible "day of judgement," that it has sometimes become difficult to say which prospect is the more repulsive, the bright or the dark, to educated minds in this century. A ridiculous Heaven, and an incredible Hell, have been only too vividly and too often proclaimed in the name of the Gospel of Jesus. It is high time, indeed, that such double travesty ceased.

But it will not cease until there is a thorough purging of the hymns employed in Christian services, and found even in some of the best Hymn Books. It would be a thankless task to enumerate such productions, but it is not too much to say that modern Christianity would gain immensely if half of the hymns referring to the future life were burnt. The other half would then call for careful revision. The notion that tender poetry, and expression of the deepest, worthiest, longing of the purest hearts, must be accompanied by false science, stupid realism, and coarse sensationalism, is, mercifully, altogether false. Especially is this need of revision true in regard to children. When all allowance is made for the imaginative age, it is much rather cruelty and danger than benediction, to store their memories with crude falsities which will later on have to be all unlearned, if they are to remain Christian. It is in general only a mawkish and morbid pietism which multiplies for little ones on life's threshold, hymns about dying. Even if there be genuine need for a few, in view of the many early deaths, at least these should be free from monstrosities which may peril-

ously lead astray the vivid imaginations of childhood.

The supreme and final influence of the truly Christian conception of the life to come must be practical. The time has happily gone by when it was deemed a mark of deep devotion to sing such selfish doggerel as sometimes then obtained, *e.g.*—

> Nothing is worth a thought beneath,
> But how I may escape the death,
> That never never dies;
> How make my own election sure,
> And when I fail on earth, secure
> A mansion in the skies.

The good tidings of Jesus for mankind are becoming better understood in these days than they have ever been before. "The Son of God is come"—said John—"and hath given us an understanding." Those who have been taught of Him look for, work for, hope for, pray for, a Kingdom of Heaven which is equally real on both sides of the grave. The Heaven that shall be, can only be a development of the Heaven that may be, ought to be, and in some measure already is, here and now. Assuredly it must be said, in regard to the two Heavens which Christ's Gospel contemplates, that he who does not appreciate both, does justice to neither.

The all-embracing, all-comprehensive truth is that, whether here or hereafter, Heaven is character, and Hell is character. There is no other heaven, no other hell, in the universe of God, than the development of the character each personality is now actually making. Death cannot save the real sinner from the consequences of the bad; cannot rob the true saint of the reward of the good. For the wilfully bad character there waits a worse Inferno than Dante's, viz. the continuance and growth of itself. Whether that growth will or can ever be

reversed, belongs to the hidden mysteries of eternity, which are far too many, too great, too deep, too complex, too difficult, for any human solution. All we know is all we need to know. There is a Hell —and it will be Hell.

For the pure and noble character, no matter in how many grades existing, there waits a better Heaven than any poet's Paradiso, even the maintenance and growth of those unmeasured capacities for good which here are little more than embryonic. Then will be the development, beyond our terrestrial conception, of all that was here dimly guessed at—as a "subliminal consciousness"—through communion with the better-known Source of all good, and with kindred spirits who are ceaselessly becoming greater and worthier under the same ennobling influences.

Thus the main elements of the Christian hope of immortality are three. Personality, without which nothing is anything; God, the Source of all good, as revealed in Jesus Christ, without communion with Whom eternity would be only an empty Nirvana; unlimited love-communion with others, compared with which the loves of earth are but fitful mixtures of flash and shadow. To the worthy blending of these three, no thought-limit whatever can be set by human science, or philosophy, or theology. The glorious possibilities of the future are boundless. They are no more necessarily a mirage, than the loftiest human character is a mirage when viewed from the standpoint of the new-born babe. If, therefore, in the words of the noblest poem hereupon ever conceived, there be—as there is—unmeasured comfort in a negation—

> Thou wilt not leave us in the dust,
> Thou madest man, he knows not why;
> He thinks he was not made to die;
> And Thou hast made him; Thou art just—

there is still more to console and enhearten, amidst life's burdens, sorrows and conflicts, in the positive assurance of the Christian Gospel. This answers to our deepest yearnings, and is confirmed by all the truth of which Jesus Christ is pledge for evermore.

> That each, who seems a separate whole,
> Should move his rounds, and fusing all
> The skirts of self again, should fall
> Remerging in the general Soul
>
> Is faith as vague as all unsweet:
> Eternal form shall still divide
> The eternal soul from all beside;
> And I shall know him when we meet;
>
> And we shall sit at endless feast,
> Enjoying each the other's good;
> What vaster dream can hit the mood
> Of Love on earth?

Here, then, abides for every true believer, a threefold inspiration—the comfort of faith, the patience of hope, the assurance of love—which is growing ever clearer and stronger, in spite of all the obscurantism of the friends, or virulence of the foes, of Christianity. In the degree in which the modern mind is set free from past delusions—from the theological fictions of a long *post mortem* sleep, or an "Intermediate state"; from the unwarranted and impossible notion of a far distant "day" for the spectacular holding of some mammoth human assize; from the gruesome and revolting representations of a Hell of everlasting torment; as well as from the uninviting prospect of a vapid, childish, pietistic Heaven—it may reasonably be hoped that this inspiration will become more real, more widespread, more precious, more potent, for every succeeding generation of mankind. Then may it well be said:—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy has begotten us anew to an ever-living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead".

WHAT ARE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES WORTH TO THE MODERN WORLD?

"The abuses and corruptions of the Church, however gross, are no argument against the utility of the institution, unless they can be shown to be inseparable from it. But however inveterate, most of them are strictly accidental. The root of all evil in the Church is the imagination that it exists for any other purpose than to foster virtue; or can be prosperous except so far as it does this. If the Church has failed, let us reform it; but we can ill afford to sever the strongest and most sacred tie that binds men to each other."—Prof. SEELEY, "Ecce Homo".

"If it were proposed to invent some special system in which covetousness would be deliberately fostered and intensified in human nature, what system could be devised which would excel our own for this purpose? Competitive commerce exalts selfishness to the dignity of a moral principle. It pits men against one another in a gladiatorial game in which there is no mercy, and in which ninety per cent of the combatants finally strew the arena. It makes Ishmaels of our best men, and teaches them that their hand must be against every man, since every man's hand is against them. It makes men who are the gentlest and kindliest friends and neighbours, relentless taskmasters in their shops and stores, who will drain the strength of their men and pay their female employées wages on which no girl can live without supplementing them in some way."
—Prof. RAUSCHENBUSCH, "Christianity and the Social Crisis".

"Public opinion in this land invariably responds to the call of the united Churches. As their power is great, so is their responsibility. I do not agree with the view that the Church is concerned only with spiritual things. Those who take that view reflect on the career of their Master. What then is the function of the Church in reference to social evils? It is not to engage in party brawls. It is not to urge or advocate any special measures. It is to create an atmosphere in which the rulers of this country not only can engage in reforming these evils, but in which it will be impossible for them not to do so."—Mr. LLOYD GEORGE at Cardiff.

"To any one who knows the sluggishness of humanity to good, the impregnable entrenchments of vested wrongs, and the long reaches of time needed from one mile-stone of progress to the next, the task of setting up a Christian social order in this modern world of ours, seems like a fair and futile dream. Yet in fact it is not one tithe as hopeless as when Jesus set out to do it."
—Prof. RAUSCHENBUSCH, "Christianity and the Social Crisis".

CHAPTER IX

WHAT ARE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES WORTH TO THE MODERN WORLD?

The words of Christ recorded in the "Sermon on the Mount" give a plain and sufficient answer to this question—which is indeed becoming a common query on modern lips. If it could be demonstrated that both in doctrine and in fact Christian Churches do truly fulfil this ideal—"ye are the salt of the earth; ye are the light of the world"—then the inquiry which here we face would be answered before it were formulated. Alas! even if the cynical criticism of Churches which has now become so fashionable in many quarters be disregarded, it would be a quixotic task to show that they can actually claim to be all that these great monosyllables imply. The words addressed to the representatives of the Seven Churches at the commencement of the last section of our New Testament, may be only too truly said to be as appropriate to-day as nineteen centuries ago. "Let all who have ears, give heed to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches." Had they only done so, how different would have been the record of Church history and the whole condition of modern Christendom. Unfortunately no portion of the Bible has been more misunderstood and misapplied, than that in which this stirring appeal is found. It may, indeed, be pleaded that this section of the New Testament known so long as "the Revelation of St. John the Divine"—is a strange and puzzling production, affording ample opportunity for every one enamoured

of bizarre theories to find here their justification. To go no further back than Luther, we know how confidently Rome identified him with the anti-Christ; and how vigorously Protestantism responded by demonstrating that the Scarlet Woman was none other than Rome herself. In our own times, Millenarians of all grades have made it a complete manual of pious calculations for immediate Armageddons and cataclysmic Advents. The complete solution of its many problems may be pronounced impossible,[1] but its spiritual and ethical principles are in perfect accord with the rest of the Christian Scriptures.

The Letters to the Seven Churches forcibly illustrate this. Circumstances have greatly altered since the age in which they were written. We live in a vastly different world from that which surrounded those Churches. Two things, however, stand out vividly. We are our own witnesses that the cruel persecution then raging, with the further onslaughts expected—which doubtless called forth this cryptic writing as a message intended to enhearten believers during the fiery ordeal—really did nothing to hinder, let alone destroy, the Christian faith. We also see that the main truth conveyed by these strong yet tender appeals—viz. that the greatest danger to the Churches was from within, not from without—has been confirmed through all the ages, and is now more manifest than ever.

As plain matter of fact, tragic but true, Christianity's deadliest enemies have always been its avowed friends. Amidst our own present educational problems we see that if the Bible is driven

[1] A very useful and sensible as well as scholarly little volume on this difficult portion of the New Testament has just been issued by Mr. C. A. Scott, in the "Century Bible," which ordinary readers, no less than preachers and teachers, would do well to study.

wholly out of elementary day schools, it will not be by means of militant Atheism or Secularism, but by the very clericalism which professes to believe in its inspiration. Even so in generations past, the un-Christian elements within the Church—including the hostile relations between various sections of it—have ever wrought more harm and hindrance to the Kingdom of Heaven which Jesus came to establish on earth, than all the anti-Christian opposition from without. It was the avowed friends of Christianity who, as Bishop Westcott says, poisoned the Church in the fourth century with the worldliness which it has never since wholly been able to exorcise. It was the professed friends of Christianity, who, in later times, blasted its history and influence with never-to-be-forgotten abominations of cruelty and horror in the Romish Inquisition and St. Bartholomew's massacre. Too well we know that there were not wanting Protestant analogues. The religious barrenness and prevalent animalism of the eighteenth century in this land, were not due to the energy of unbelief, but to the hollowness of belief.

We are beginning the twentieth century, it may be said, under better auspices. Which is happily true. But it affords no ground whatever for easy-going optimism. Whilst the Churches have certainly been growing in numbers, the population has been increasing still more rapidly. The very developments of science and literature which have helped to purify and enlarge Christian conceptions, are now proclaiming themselves independent of any Christian sanctions at all. Moreover, the wonderful cheapening of all issues from the modern press has put into the hands of militant unbelief such a weapon of offence as they have never had before; and fullest advantage has been and is being taken of it to assault everything Christian with a virulent effective-

ness hitherto unparalleled. From all which it comes to pass that Christianity is to-day in an utterly unprecedented condition. It is equally better and worse than ever before. There are in our modern midst more and better Christians than the world has ever seen. But there is at the same time a larger proportion than ever of our fellow-men—even in this country, to say nothing of the Continent, or America—who treat religion in general with indifference, and Christianity in particular as if it were but a doubtful or optional trifle. Church Congresses and Free Church Conferences are no doubt pleasant social gatherings, and hopeful signs of the times, but they have not been able to prevent either repeated decreases in Church membership, or dwindling attendances at public worship. They do, indeed, little or nothing to alter the fact that four-fifths of the population of this most Christian country in the world, are outside all the Churches; whilst the modern atmosphere is tending more and more every year to increase such a proportion. How serious is the modern situation in these respects has recently been pointed out by the Bampton Lecturer already mentioned, who cannot be accused of pessimistic bias, but who chose as his theme "The Reproach of the Gospel," and has justified it in pages which lose none of their weighty significance for being moderate and refined.

If it be asked—Why such a title for avowedly Christian deliverances?—let us listen again more carefully to his estimate, as given on a previous page:—

> "When we look frankly at the present state of Christianity from these three points, its alleged origin, its actual merits as a rule of life, and its effect upon individuals, we are forced to confess that its influence on mankind at large

is and has been strangely disproportionate alike to its high claims, and to the reasonable expectations of those who saw its beginnings."[1]

This is a very mild statement of facts which are in these days often put with ruthless bluntness. The Christian Church, we are told, is actually failing whilst it seems to succeed. New churches are being built, certainly, in goodly numbers, but as many old ones are left empty. Even as churches spring up in new suburban neighbourhoods, the masses of the people in all our great cities are being more and more alienated from worship, let alone membership, by social problems, whilst the better-educated classes are rendered hesitating or indifferent by critical difficulties. And all this, after nineteen centuries of opportunity, in the most Christian country in the world. Is it possible for any truly Christian mind to survey such a condition of affairs with equanimity? There may yet be some avowed believers found to echo the sentiment of which a well-known American divine recently delivered himself, in a leading religious journal—"I thank God that the Church is not commissioned to save the world". But they are surely few who will join in such a thanksgiving. For it inevitably raises the question—What then are churches for? As the Lecturer just quoted says, the plain issue must be faced—"whether Christ intended His Church to be universal, or to be but a limited body of believers saved out of a lost world". This latter Calvinistic suggestion—the ultimate significance of which is an elect few who cannot but be saved, and a vast majority decreed to eternal ruin—has mercifully become repulsive and intolerable to the Christian conscience.

[1] Rev. J. H. F. Peile, "Bampton Lectures for 1907," p. 14.

Had it been the purpose of Christianity merely to save, in another world, a few out of the wreck of this world, it might certainly claim to have succeeded. But it would in such case proclaim itself to be of little or no avail for the solution of the human problems of the twentieth century; though these, after all, only differ in quantity from those which Jesus Himself so unflinchingly confronted in the first century. Such an avowal of limitation as the above-quoted thanksgiving involves, is utterly at variance with the whole teaching of Christ, and with the foundation principles of Christianity. If it be true at all that "God is love," then that love must embrace all humanity, without respect of persons. Whether we can apprehend all the age-long world-wide workings of that love or not, the plain duty of the Christian Church is to bring home to the very utmost of its power, this greatest of all messages to the heart of the race. Mr. Peile, indeed, hints at the coming of a new movement in modern life and thought which will "if Christianized, make the world Christian". Then like an honest writer, he bethinks himself of what he has said, and adds:—

> "To make the world Christian! The words imply a revolution so tremendous that the mere naming of it moves experience to an incredulous smile and makes enthusiasm itself falter. And yet it is the task which our Lord laid upon His disciples, the task in which all Christians, lay or cleric, man or woman, are solemnly pledged to take their part."

How far the modern world is from being Christian, or "all who profess and call themselves Christians" from taking "their part" towards making it so, may be left to the honest verdict of any intelligent observer.

It cannot, of course, be denied that a great deal has been accomplished and is yet being done in our day by the Christian Church. Besides all the results tabulated in history—when fairly estimated[1]—Christianity represents in our modern midst an unparalleled and incalculable expenditure of time, energy, money, devotion, spent upon highest and worthiest purposes. No one can honestly call this in question.[2] Nor is there any real ground whatever for doubting either that it will continue or that it will increase. The great matter now to be estimated is the worth and extent, the quality and quantity, of its general influence upon the modern world. What has humanity gained or lost, during the centuries of the Christian era, from the existence and work of the Church in

[1] It is so notoriously the custom of anti-Christian writers to lay all stress on the dark side of Church history, as if there were no other, that it is correspondingly refreshing to find a "Rationalist" of Lord Morley's calibre administering a well-deserved rebuke to this untruthful one-sidedness. "We get very wearied of the persistent identification of the Church throughout the dark ages with fraud and imposture and self-seeking, when we have once learned what is undoubtedly the most important principle in the study of those times, viz. that it was the Churchmen who kept alive the flickering light of civilization amid the raging storms of uncontrolled passion and violence."

[2] Thus the latest and most effective popular opponent writes: "The Christians have virtual command of all the churches, universities and schools. They have the countenance and support of the thrones, Parliaments, Cabinets, and aristocracies of the world, and they have behind them the nominal support of the world's newspaper press. They have behind them the traditions of eighteen centuries. They have formidable allies in the shape of whole schools of philosophy and whole libraries of eloquence and learning. They have the zealous service and unswerving credence of millions of honest and worthy citizens; and they are defended by solid ramparts of prejudice and sentiment and obstinate old custom" ("God and My Neighbour," R. Blatchford, p. 149). Even when some discount is deducted from such an estimate, it is a large confession, considering the state of affairs contemplated by the book of Revelation.

all its branches? What is the worth to the modern world of all the public worship and private devotion, the labour and the sacrifice, the measureless expenditure of mind and heart, which are increasingly associated with the Christian faith? Suppose that its opponents could be obliged[1] by the wholesale fulfilment of their wish, in the destruction of all the churches and their influence, would the effect be unmeasured loss, or gain?

In any case this is a great question. In this country, at all events, if not also in Europe, the total destruction of Christian Churches would mean nothing less than a different world. As Sir John Seeley wrote in his famous "Ecce Homo":—

> "It is idle for any virtue that springs up in the neighbourhood of the Christian Church to claim to be independent of it. Christian influences are in the air; our very conception of virtue is Christian; the tone, the habits of sentiment and language—in short, all the associations of virtue—have been furnished by the discipline of the Christian Church. . . . It is the only institution which is distinctively and deliberately virtue-making, and the one which inherits the most complete ideal of virtue."

Coming from such a source, this estimate cannot be pronounced ecclesiastically biassed. Its substantial truth may be assumed. In face of it, much of the cheap abuse of the Churches in these days is seen to be unworthy of notice. When, however, the assertion is roundly made that "Christianity does not make men lead better lives than others lead

[1] "The churches must be smashed."—R. Blatchford.
"One of the greatest social needs of our time, is to sweep away the whole tottering structure of conventional religion and worship."—Mr. Jos. McCabe.

who are not Christians"—we must have patience with the superficial tirade of anti-Christian journalism, for the sake of the valid principle of comparison which such an allegation embodies. It is, indeed, not only a challenge which modern Christianity can in no way evade, but also a true echo to well-known and emphatic words of Christ Himself, such as can neither be forgotten nor ignored.

Out of a fair, full, and steady survey of the whole situation, one clear certainty emerges. Whether it finds expression in the reckless virulence of popular journals or the academic utterances of a university Professor, the conclusion is the same. It is made plain by the facts of daily life; emphasized in the enormous growth of modern populations; thrown up into lurid relief by the pressure of social problems. It is accentuated by the advance of science, the development of criticism, the increase of theological unrest. The religious *status quo* is doomed. Christianity, as represented by the Churches, will have to be either mended or ended. The crucible into which modern religion is being cast, as we advance into the present century, is such as the world has never before known; and only that which is true to the uttermost, whether intellectually or morally, scientifically or spiritually, will stand the test. The worth of the Church to the world must no doubt ultimately depend upon the worth of the individual believer to the Church. But before the latter can be made matter for personal appeal, the former must be clearly set forth as a true and worthy ideal. The homely but searching question—What are Churches for? is thus simply inevitable. Until it is frankly faced, and unequivocally answered, there is no standard whereby any member of a Christian Church may test his own worth or worthlessness; nor is there any rational ground of appeal for the

appreciation and maintenance of Christianity as a factor in the progress of humanity.

Leaving elaboration in detail to the volumes, or libraries, which may be necessary, the required answer to the pressing question can be stated with definite succinctness and with comprehensive brevity. Prof. Burkitt summed up the whole situation most truly when, a short time since, he wrote that—

> "The Christian Church to-day is in the position that Crosby Hall occupied a few years ago, and if it is to be preserved, it must convince men that it provides what they cannot do without."

No statement can be more pertinent, or more sure. It corresponds both to the facts of our day and the principles of the Gospel. If Christian Churches are veritably "the salt of the earth and the light of the world," then humanity will never let them go. For they are, in such case, unmistakable and irresistible necessities. If they are other or less than this, then they will be swallowed up—slowly may be, but surely—in the advancing tide of a civilization which finds that it can do without them. On what plain lines can the challenge of such a situation be met? On these. The immeasurable worth to mankind of the Catholic Church of Jesus Christ, as represented by the various sections which compose it—the "many members in one body," or many folds in "one flock"—is fourfold. It relates with unmistakable distinctness to God; to man; to the whole of this life; and to a life to come. More fully expressed, this means that Christian Churches exist in order that they may bear unique, unequivocal, and ceaseless witness, to four great principles of truth. These are so important and comprehensive that all other interests are small by comparison. Men can no more "do without" them, in view of human nature's needs,

capacities, and hopes, than the boy who would become a noble man can do without the discipline of education.

These great principles, the enforcement and illustration of which constitute the very *raison d'être* of the Christian Church, are (1) The actuality of God, and the significance of His relation to the world as revealed in Jesus Christ. (2) The ennobling effect of the knowledge of this relation upon human character. (3) The consequent larger effect for good of this ideal of character upon human society in general. (4) The final issue of the whole human episode now being enacted upon this planet, alike as regards the individual and the race. These four manifestly deserve far more thorough discussion than can be accorded them here. But our purpose will be served if we look them earnestly, even though briefly, in the face.

Whatever else may be said to characterize this age, it is undeniable that greater numbers than ever are hungry for the truth, in regard to themselves, their fellows, and the universe. Only it must be the truth, and not mere tradition. It must accord with reason, and not simply reiterate ecclesiastical dogma. It must be the veritable bread of life, and not theological stones. Life's supreme issues are not decided now, nor ever again will be, by authoritative pronouncements of either priest or Church. Such methods of settlement in human affairs have had their day and ceased to be. But if these four can be secured; the highest truth; the noblest character; the broadest sympathy; the largest hope; they will constitute more than sufficient reason for the continuance of the existence and work of Christian Churches. Of all men who deserve the name, outside the Churches, it may be boldly said that they cannot do without these. And to all inside, the

words of the writer of our Second Epistle of Peter will apply with far more force in the twentieth century than in the second—"If these things are yours and abound, they make you to be neither indolent nor unfruitful, with respect to the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ". With all modest deliberateness, but with earnest and unhesitating emphasis it must be said, that upon the degree in which those who belong to the Churches are or are not faithful to the high commission these four great principles imply, depends not only the value of Christianity to the world of this day, but the certainty of its continuance or decay during the century before us. Let us, therefore, restate them as clearly as is possible in few words.

1. The highest truth. Christian Churches are witnesses for the Christ of the Gospels, and for the whole content of His meaning when He assured the disciples that through Him they would find the "pearl of great price". "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free." The Christian claim is that in Him, and in all He said, and did, and was, are to be found valid answers to such questions as only men, of all creatures on earth, can ask, but which they are constrained to ask by reason of their very powers of thought and capacity of nature. To no other creature on earth than man, is "truth" anything at all. But although there may yet be many Pilates in civilization, the normal man who has left savagery behind, can never ask with scorn —"What is truth?" It may be taken as a genuine sign of the upward evolution of the race, that all truth is in our day increasingly precious, even to the average man. For the Christian Church, unless it be utterly corrupt, the truth must ever be the treasure beyond all compare. "Whatsoever things

are true—cherish the thought of these things "—as enunciated by Paul,[1] is and must always be the veritable Magna Charta of Christian liberty of mind and heart. Such an ideal not only sets the genuine believer for ever free from all ecclesiastical bondage, but binds upon him the duty of fullest appreciation of all that science and art and literature can teach him. But "whatsoever" is a wider term than any one of these, or all of them combined. It contemplates the possibility of another realm of truth, beyond and above all the information and inspiration that may be derived from these ordinary human sources. It suggests, indeed, that by very means of their help there comes to pass both the need and the opportunity for something higher and still more precious.

That which is true concerning man, can never be fully appreciated without also a knowledge of the truth concerning God. Human nature remains an insoluble problem until it is surveyed in "the light that never was on sea or land," i.e. plainly—to use the language of one of the most significant utterances of the whole New Testament—"the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ". As the universe without the thought of God is unthinkable, so that we do not believe in God because we may but because we must; so is man, an infinitesimal but real speck in the universe, as inexplicable without God, and withal as helpless, as the fish without the ocean. The mind of man which in all its mystery is at least a pragmatic certainty, can no more find rest in its ceaseless investigation of phenomena without God, than the dove sent forth from Noah's ark could settle until it returned to its refuge. And the poor little lark pitifully confined

[1] Phil. iv. 8.

in its narrow cage, does not more restlessly preen its wings and pine for the celestial blue, than the heart of humanity for some real knowledge of and communion with the Great Unknown to whom, or to which, man feels himself related. The history of the evolution of religion upon which so much modern stress is laid, abundantly testifies to this, in pathetic and pitiful as well as often tragic and lurid fashion. "The golden bough" and "The dying god," with all the weird and staggering rituals they connote, are but specimens of the poor blind groping of an evolving humanity for something measurelessly higher, stronger, more helpful than themselves.

In our own modern environment greatest things have become small through familiarity. God as our Heavenly Father, man as the moral heir of immortality, Christ as the Divine-human Redeemer, the Bible with its estimate of sin and ideal of holiness, are to the majority of our fellow-countrymen to-day mere trite commonplaces. To increasing numbers they are all but verbal trifles; to others sheer delusion. The estimate of our Bampton Lecturer is only too true to fact:—

> "Not only the Church but Christianity itself and all supernatural religion are called in question, or dismissed as not worth calling in question. On one hand we have a comparatively small force of active and articulate hostility, which has its value as a stimulus to closer thought and more energetic work. On the other we are oppressed by the dead weight of spiritual inertia, a widespread and profound indifference to dogma as the guide and motive of action." [1]

[1] p. 18.

Amidst all this modern complication, the outstanding certainty is that whatever may be worthy, indifference is unworthy. Whoever may be right, the belittler of the issues is wrong. The themes for thought and interests at stake are, beyond all controversy, great. They can only be small as a star is small, to a thoughtless eye. The untaught country swain may deem Sirius a trifle compared with the moon. But even the child, as now educated, knows better. When with the eye of scientific scrutiny we draw near to that far-off point of light, we are overwhelmed to find that whilst our own sun is five hundred times greater than all the planets which encircle it put together, Sirius is equal to some sixty of our suns. So much may distance and unthinking familiarity deceive us. It is no less true that amidst the whole whirl of present-day civilisation, our thronging business, our social problems, the discoveries of science, and the fascinations of literature, the great principles for which Christian Churches stand eclipse all these clamorous interests both in significance and in value to humanity. It is not a rhapsodical phrase but a sober truth, that on their acceptance or rejection turns the future of our race.

That such an assertion will in some quarters provoke a cynical smile, and in others a storm of dissent, goes without saying. But neither smile nor frown avails to alter the fact that the truth concerning God, and the Bible, and Jesus Christ, when all the ideals, duties, comforts, hopes, and inspirations which follow from it are considered—is fraught with immeasurable consequences alike for individuals, nations, and the race. Even if there were no fairer aspect of the case than is afforded by the usual cynical criticism of religious history, it would still be true that from all the recorded or alleged

mischiefs which have in the past been associated with the Christian Church, we and our children need to be preserved. No one can deny the actuality and costliness of the many faults and failures which have in past centuries blighted Church history. They have afforded only too ample scope for the sneerer. But this is not the whole case. Only wilful and perverse ignorance can pretend that it is a fair representation of what Christianity has meant to western humanity, during these eighteen centuries. Our above-quoted Regius Professor of history at Cambridge, whose ability and impartiality are beyond question, affirms distinctly, after the very frankest acknowledgment of Christian imperfections :—

> "All this may be conceded without conceding for a moment that the world can do without Christ and His Church. If a high and complete morality often exists outside the Church, it does not often exist independent of it. The atmosphere of Europe has been saturated for some fifteen centuries with Christian principles, and however far the rebellion against the Church may have spread, it may still be called the moral university of the world, not merely the greatest but the only great school of virtue existing."[1]

But the main matter for consideration here is not how far the Christian Church has been true or false to its high commission. It may be conceded freely that even yet the greatest need of Christendom is that Christians should be converted to Christianity. The real question is as to the worth, for the men and women of this and the coming age, of all those deep convictions, high ideals, unmeasured comforts,

[1] "Ecce Homo," cheap edition, p. vii.

duties, hopes, inspirations, which are inseparable from the doctrine of God as given to men—according to the whole New Testament record—in and by Jesus Christ.

The value for humanity of the knowledge of God, must of course depend upon the character attributed to Him by any religion. It goes without saying that the Christian Church is pledged to the Divine Fatherhood,[1] which, as an actual truth, comes directly and unequivocally from Christ alone. Other religions and religious teachers have given hints of such a conception, but they were little more, even in the Old Testament, than wistful longings wherein the thought was begotten by the wish. None other than Jesus has ever said, with a dignified simplicity which rules out for ever all notion of fanatic enthusiasm—"He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father". That is the world's greatest utterance; and its worth to humanity is so unquestionable and immeasurable, that only one query is left concerning it, viz. is it true?—or is it too good to be true? To give a firm, clear, reliable answer to this, is the first great work and worth of the Christian Church.

Beside this, all else is trifling. Compared with this assertion—including all that flows from it—all ecclesiastical systems, creeds, forms of government, dignities, ceremonies, conventions, are as the small dust of the balance. It cannot, indeed, be honestly denied that the true doctrine of God has suffered

[1] There are, it must be confessed, occasional utterances to the contrary, as hinted on a previous page (112). "It is marvellous indeed that in these days there should still be found any in the Free Churches who think that they are honouring the Gospel and paying highest regard to the New Testament, by employing a few picked passages, irrespective of their context, to contravene the unmistakable doctrine of Jesus, and so mutilate the very soul and substance of His whole message to humanity". But such belated Calvinism is happily only held now by an insignificant minority, who may be neglected in a general statement like that above.

sadly at the hands of its professed exponents. Its actual distortion, through the intervention of ecclesiasticism and false theology, has been and sometimes yet is lamentable in the extreme. Probably most of the modern recoil from the Churches finds here its ultimate cause. But it need not be so. Any form of Church government may be a channel for the communication of the supreme truth which assures mankind of the actual and eternal love of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. A good illustration occurs in the noble volume by Mr. Peile to which reference has so often been made. As examining chaplain to a bishop he expresses manfully his own conviction :—

> "I am a firm believer in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. I deliberately call it a sacrament as being neither a magical ceremony nor merely a decent form with no particular meaning. I would not abate or change one word of our Ordination service, for I hold that God has given to the Church authority to delegate to the priest and the bishop spiritual functions which no man can rightly discharge unless he be duly ordained thereto."

Many of us could not herein follow him, because we find no place for either priest or historic episcopate, in the constitution of Christ's Kingdom upon earth. But we rejoice to know that from his standpoint such a Christian teacher can say, and does say, as heartily as any Nonconformist :—

> "There is nothing but a belief in the Fatherhood of God and the Oneness of men with Him and in Him, that can make us think of others and treat them as brethren, seeing our good in their good. . . . If we could learn and teach these two lessons of the Fatherhood of God, to care for

> others, and to put away over care for ourselves; a good many of our economic problems would be solved by ceasing to exist."[1]

From the true appreciation of the Divine Fatherhood as here hinted, there cannot but flow consequences of highest import to all human society. This brings us to the consideration of the value of Christian ethics. To elaborate this would require a treatise.[2] For our purpose here, it will be sufficient and convenient to summarize the Christian claim in the well-chosen words of one who ought not to be wholly forgotten. The late esteemed and erudite Professor of Latin at Owens College, Manchester, wrote:—

> "Not only because the system of Christian ethics transcends all others in purity, but because this perfect purity is reached by a scientific method of development, is based upon a sure foundation, and has shown itself by far the most powerful help that the world has known for its regeneration, do we claim for it an origin directly and immediately Divine.
>
> "We are able to assert, in spite of the protest that misconceptions have raised against such a tenet, that one characteristic which distinguishes Christian from pagan ethics, is their unblemished perfection and completeness. Christianity supplies to man in every condition of life principles which were calculated to mould and fashion him into a model of all that his heart has recognized as purest and best. And where the application of these principles might have

[1] "Bampton Lectures," 1907, pp. 97, 186.

[2] Such as, say, Dr. Newman Smyth's "Christian Ethics,"—in the International Theological Library, published by Messrs. T. and T. Clark.

been doubtful, or likely to be mistaken, it has supplemented them by specific precepts."[1]

Here, again, the only possible reply to the assertion of the value of such an ethical standard and stimulus for humanity, is to deny that it is true. This may of course be done, even as to-day anything and everything Christian is, in some quarters, denied. But the denial is sufficiently met elsewhere, to permit the claim to be here maintained that, speaking generally, nothing is fraught with such great importance to the well-being of humanity as the great truths and principles for which the Christian Churches stand.

As these pages are written from the standpoint of a liberal Evangelicalism, it is pertinent to remark that the contribution of the Evangelical Churches to the true appreciation and application of the doctrines and ideals of Christianity, as the embodiment of the highest truth that can concern men, has been both vast and permanent. It were easy, of course, to point out their failures, especially in insisting too often on a rigid narrowness of theological interpretation, and in the assumption of credal finality. Even yet it cannot be denied that the pious imagination largely prevails that all the truth about God, and Christ, and the Bible, and human nature, has been made out; so that, in regard to the essentials of Christian faith, nothing remains for us but to echo the convictions of our fathers. But such a delusion grows less and less operative every year. In the light of to-day all those great assumptions upon which Church work and worship depend, require increasingly to be both purified and justified. Such a process of theological evolution is happily taking

[1] "The Light of the World," by Prof. A. S. Wilkins—a valuable little volume unfortunately now out of print, pp. 146, 180.

place, as resistlessly as gradually, to the unmeasured benediction of all concerned.

Whilst, however, the fierce light of our modern knowledge pierces all theologies through and through, it yet leaves the world of inquiring minds largely in the dark as regards the very subjects which it criticises. Hence there is more need than ever that in the very highest sense the Churches should be "the light of the world," no less than pragmatically, "the salt of the earth". Preachers are now called upon to be teachers, and hearers learners, as never before. True, there are many in pulpits who cannot teach, as there are also in pews who will not learn. But these, however sincere, must be regarded as invalids, and must neither be allowed to rule, nor taken as satisfactory types of Christian belief. If the New Testament is at all to be regarded, the Churches are just as really schools for moral and spiritual truth, as day-schools and universities are for science and literature. The vastness of such a commission may well give modern believers pause; but nothing can revoke it, or lessen it, or make it trifling. It is easy to say—as did a prominent preacher in the metropolis recently—that "an ounce of witness is worth a ton of argument, and one pulse of the love-life is more than equal to a whole shelf full of dry-as-dust Christian apologetics". But, however well meant, such talk may be very misleading. Who invented the hideous term "apologetics" we may neither know nor care. But it is a libel on Christ Himself and on all the New Testament, to insinuate that reasons for faith must be "dry as dust"—and that all required to-day is emotional "witness," altogether independent of argument. Every fanatic delivers his witness with fervour. To pit emotion against reason, in the name of Christian devotion, is a counsel of delusion. What is needed more than ever, in our day, is the

ceaseless blending of both. For, as the late Mr. Aubrey L. Moore truly said, "The human mind craves to be both religious and rational, and he who is not both, is neither".

The ceaseless pains and care, the study and devotion, the humility and earnestness, which are hereby demanded from every Christian Church, i.e. from all its officers and members alike, may well be pronounced measureless. But as these are in some degree needed for all noble endeavour, it is only natural that they should be most required for the highest of all purposes. Let the truths of science, and art, and literature, and philosophy, and politics, be deemed as important as their devotees insist; it yet remains true that nothing can ultimately be of such import to mankind as the truth or falsity of all that is connoted in the Christian phrase "Eternal life". The Church exists, therefore, in order to make clear and effective for the world at large that which, hereupon, it knows and proves to be true.

2. The noblest character.

Such an aim as that just specified, can never be attained by the mere teaching of theology, however accurate and exalted. "Eternal life"—"that they should know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent"—can never be exhibited, let alone proved, to mankind by creeds, or schemes, or systems, of any kind. Character alone can either represent or justify such ideals of duty, and inspirations towards their attainment, as are inseparable from the great Christian assumptions. Who can fail to see that the ruthless criticism and uncompromising opposition of our time will never be appeased, let alone silenced, by words alone? We are bluntly asked by popular unbelief:—

> "Are there no good, nor happy, nor worthy men and women to-day outside the pale of the Christian Churches? Amongst the eight hundred millions of human beings who do not know or do not follow Christ, are there none as happy and as worthy as any who follow Him?"[1]

The only effective reply must be an appeal to Christian character. Is that character, on the average, higher, or not higher, than the non-Christian? Still further, as regards individuals, the inquiry is pressed home :—

> "You speak of the spiritual value of your religion. What can it give you more than Socrates or Buddha possessed? These men had wisdom, courage, morality, fortitude, love, mercy. Can you find in all the world to-day two men as wise, as good, as gentle, as happy? Yet these men died centuries before Christ was born."

Such questions can in these days neither be prevented nor evaded. Nor is there any Christian reason why they should be. For they are neither more nor less than an echo of Christ's own words—"If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what extra do ye? Do not even the Gentiles the same?" This "extra"—which is at once the most literally accurate rendering of the word attributed to Christ by the Evangelist, and the most distinctive feature of His ethical law—constitutes the practical *sine quâ non* of Christianity.

The greatest pragmatic heresy of popular religion

[1] "God and My Neighbour," p. 172.

in our midst, is that Christian character and good character are one and the same. But the words of Jesus are as unmistakable to the contrary as the protests of modern unbelief are irrepressible. The vast significance of the truth in this regard, must be sufficient apology for repeating what has already been remarked hereupon in a preceding section.[1] It is quite undeniable that there are thousands of our fellow-countrymen, outside all the Churches, who are in many real respects good.[2] "I suggest"—says the author just quoted—"that consolation, and fortitude, and cheerfulness, and loving-kindness, are not in the exclusive gift of the Christian religion but may be found by good men in all religions." And he might with equal truth have added, in men of no religion. The old notion that Christian goodness had to be established by denying all other goodness, has long since been dismissed from honest thought as but a pious delusion. The value of the Christian ideal has to be made clear, not by denying but by exceeding all other goodness. No words can possibly be plainer than Christ's own to this effect. "I say to you that except your righteousness shall *exceed* that of the scribes and Pharisees, ye will in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Nor is there any difficulty at all in applying this principle to modern life. Professor Seeley expressed the truth most aptly in one word when he wrote that "Probably no one will deny that in Christian countries *this higher-toned goodness*, which we call holiness, has existed". The term "holiness" is even yet strangely

[1] See pp. 119-121.

[2] Out of the unnumbered host take one which happens to be in the press as these pages are being written. Of a certain well-known Professor who is said to be "the most learned of modern explorers," it is affirmed that he is "a man of the highest personal character, as well known and fully trusted in England as in his own country. He possesses the confidence of scientific experts, while his lovable personality endears him to all." And yet he is an avowed Agnostic!

repellent to the majority of men,[1] but its true interpretation as the "higher-toned goodness," is the very soul and substance of the Christian character-ideal.

It is the incarnation of this, in all life's actualities, which constitutes at once the commission of the Church and its worth to the world. The teaching of the truth alone, be it ever so transcendent, can never suffice. Let all creeds and beliefs, from any and every section of the universal Church, be taken at their best; it must yet be owned that doctrines are but ideals, and sermons are nothing more than suggestions. That which is absolutely necessary, if mankind are to be really influenced by Christian ideals, is the incarnation of these in personal character. Religious homilies, however sincere and stimulating, are but as the flash of a meteor. Mass meetings of enthusiastic believers may be very inspiring, but they are just as transient. Whereas crops are ripened not by lightning flashes or swarms of Leonids, but by the persistent shining of the sun, even so will the unique and constant characteristics which are included in "this higher-toned goodness which we call holiness," alone avail to bring to pass a truly Christian civilization.

Alas! what does our modern Lecturer say, speaking with all the measured mildness of cultured restraint, and from the most sympathetic standpoint?

[1] Such shrinking may be partly due to the mixture of pietism with unloveliness, or even hypocrisy, which has sometimes labelled itself as holy. But so long as we have an open New Testament, nothing can excuse the gross cartooning occasionally found in popular attacks on Christian principles. When, after the false and foolish representation of holiness already quoted (p. 120), the author of "God and My Neighbour" asks,—"What have we to do with such dreamy, self-centred emotional holiness here and now in London?"—it is enough to reply—As much as we have with Socialistic anarchy, free love, and universal looting. For these latter are quite as fairly attributed to Socialism, as the contemptible traits of character he adduces are to Christian holiness.

After the remark already quoted[1] as to "the great religious difficulty of the present day," he proceeds—

> "We are told that whole classes of our fellow-countrymen have drifted away from any kind of systematic religion, and the chief cause of this departure is the impression that outward religious observance and the acceptance of creeds, make no difference in action and in character; that people who go to church are no better than those who do not."

What is to be said in reply to such a statement? Well, certainly not less than the Lecturer himself adds—

> "We know that this charge against Church and Churchmen is not wholly true, but it is true enough to be widely accepted, and very difficult to disprove; and the belief in its truth has incalculable influence in driving men not only from the church but from Christianity altogether."

The two truths most vividly emergent from any such survey of the modern facts, are, that character is necessarily personal, and that the genuine Christian character—which is, in one word, "holiness"—is distinct from ordinary goodness.

As to the former, there can be no such thing as a mass of character; any more than there could be even the possibility of character at all, if man were the mere "creature of heredity and environment". The avowed Christian definitely turns his back upon any so-called "Deterministic" philosophy, which would not only make the whole Bible a delusion, but contradict his most indubitable self-consciousness. But self-realization brings with it all the responsibility

[1] See p. 97. "Bampton Lectures," pp. 14, 19. The frequent references to these impressive and timely lectures are made on purpose to draw special attention to them.

attaching to a living unit of power. When we speak of the character of a Church or of Christian Churches, we cannot but mean the aggregate influence of the personal characters of each single member.

The true import of this only becomes clear when the second of the above specified truths is taken into full account. For it is manifest that if the Gospel of Christ be true at all, it is the assurance of most unique and extraordinary truth. The average goodness, therefore, which may naturally be evolved from an advanced civilization, can never be Christianity's sufficient witness. Consider again, for a moment, Christ's own declaration: "Ye are the salt of the earth". The proleptic application of this to all who in any age call themselves by His name, will not be questioned. But if we take the figure seriously, and carefully scrutinize our common salt, we find not only that it is composed of distinct particles or grains, but that every one of these, no matter how small the ultimate molecule, exhibits the indubitable chemical union of sodium chloride. Imagine, then, each man and each woman who in these days is accounted Christian, actually exhibiting the mind that was in Jesus Christ! As a consequence, through communion with Him, conceive of all Christians as showing, in every respect and always, a life and character and conduct definitely better than any other known apart from Him. That would be a witness indeed. The effect of such a testimony upon human society could not be measured.

From such a Christianity, however, we seem at present, in spite of all the experiences of two millenniums, to be tragically distant. Yet it is as sure as the truth of God and the nature of man, that nothing less than this will ever avail to establish the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. This, therefore,

and nothing less, is the main work and worth of the Christian Church. Nothing less broad, and deep, and noble, and tender, and practical, can ever exemplify that incarnation of the love of God in Jesus Christ towards humanity, unless which be true Christianity is but the world's greatest religious delusion. By such a test, then, not by numbers, not by social position, not by financial strength, not by national conventions, the Christian Church is to be tested. Apart from this, its work is but wasted energy, and its worth is nil. "If the salt have lost its savour, it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men." There can be little doubt that to just such a crucial testing as these words imply, Christianity is coming—or is come—as the twentieth century unfolds. How, in face of all the facts, any honest observer can be "incorrigibly optimistic," passes ordinary comprehension. Prof. Eucken, who just now has the ear of the religious and philosophical world perhaps more than any other man save Bergson, has confessed that he takes a "pessimistic view of the future of the Churches as existing," whilst recognising the need for Christian fellowship and inculcating a philosophy "essentially Christian".[1] The inference is obvious.

There is, however, one unmeasured comfort in face of the stupendous difficulties and undeniable failures suggested, viz. that the tiniest fraction of Christian reality counts as a contribution to the upward evolution contemplated. "The Kingdom of God," said Jesus, "comes not with observation." Not by convulsive throes, nor by revivalistic convulsions, but by gentle, slow yet steady growth,

[1] This conclusion is further embodied and amplified in his booklet "Können wir noch Christen sein?" published by Veil & Co., Leipzig.

will the Lord's Prayer be answered. Not "from above," as the current thoughtless phrase runs, but from round about, as well as from within, will any Millennium come. "The kingdom of God is in the very midst of you"[1] was the Master's reply to those who sought a sign from heaven. Not by great masses but in tiny grains, does that leaven work which is to transform earth's sins and shames and sorrows into love, and purity, and peace, and hope. If we may quote once more from so impartial a source, the close of Prof. Seeley's memorable chapter upon the "Enthusiasm of Humanity" gives in incisive summary an ideal which is not alone the hope of the future, but the unmeasured inspiration of every real disciple of Jesus Christ, however humble his sphere or humanly unknown his influence.

> "Perhaps the truth is, that there has scarcely been a town in any Christian country since the time of Christ, where a century has passed without exhibiting a character of such elevation that his mere presence has shamed the bad and made the good better, and has been felt at times like the presence of God Himself. And if this be so, has Christ failed? Or can Christianity die?"

To such a query, unbelief scarcely less than belief emphatically answers—No. But the very echo of that universal consent is the unmistakable assurance that without such witness as this, let come what else there may, the days of Christianity are numbered.

3. The broadest and deepest sympathy.

Although the Gospel of Christ necessarily begins with individual character, it is impossible that it

[1] Luke XVII. 20. For this, the true rendering, in spite of Tolstoi, see Internat. Crit. Commentary—Dr. Plummer.

should end there. Conviction may grow in isolation, but character requires fellowship for its scope. Thus it comes to pass that the Christian ideal which the Churches have to embody, if they are to be worth perpetuating in human society, is as broadly practical as it is spiritually deep and high. True there are not a few Christian believers—whose sincerity need not be questioned—especially in the Evangelical Churches, whose only conception of Christian service is the "saving of souls". To them, the only function of the Church is to "proclaim the Gospel". The work of all Christian Churches is to be purely "spiritual". One of them wrote to the religious press just recently, to protest against a "Methodist Union for social service," on the alleged ground that —"Nothing but the grace of God is able to reach and to purify the hearts of men. None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good." Such sentiments are often as popular as they are pious. The question whether they are either true or sufficient, apparently does not occur to those who hold them. The typical sentence, for instance, here quoted, is simply untrue. It is not true that "nothing but the grace of God" can reach men's hearts. It is not true that "none but Jesus can do sinners good". For there are many influences that can reach men for their profit, and do sinners good, besides those included in the usual "spiritual" programme. Such mutilations of the whole mission of Christianity, are as contrary to the spirit and practice of Jesus Himself, as to the teaching and example of the Apostles. "Whatsoever things are true"—to quote Paul once more—"take them all into account." Verily there are many and dreadful things that are only too true to-day, which are never contemplated in "revival" meetings, but which are quite as contrary to the will of God as any ordinary sins, or any of the evils

against which both Christ and the Apostle so strenuously protested in their day. Let us purposely take just a couple of brief summaries of modern facts from fair sources, not given to exaggeration. First, from the standpoint of religious conversatism :—

> "The poor of London have been thrust, and are kept by a Society which till lately called itself Christian, in conditions of life which make the preaching of the Gospel to them a mockery. They are practically denied their share in the Fatherhood of God, which for one thing promises to honest work enough of the necessities of life. They, however, are always 'anxious for the morrow' with too good cause. They are forced to be dishonest, and impure, and cruel to one another. . . . It is not in London alone, or in other great towns only, that men and women are forced to live like the beasts without the beasts' happy want of self-consciousness.
>
> "What, if we look at it sincerely, are the conditions of casual and underpaid labour, but slavery without its safeguards? The acknowledged slave was often well treated, clothed and fed, and even maintained in his old age. The free workers, slaves of penury, have not even the value of a chattel. They are absolutely dependent on employers, who too often cannot afford to treat them well, being themselves also in bondage to the tyrant Competition. They cannot leave their miserable work, or if they do wander away it is only to find elsewhere conditions equally cruel and degrading. They have no claim on their masters, beyond a minimum payment for tasks actually done; and when they fall, weary and worn out, only

destitution awaits them. Even the last and vilest reproach of the slave system is not done away. Virtue, honour, purity, are as hard to keep for thousands of free women as they ever were for the veriest ancient slave."[1]

Or, from the standpoint of a man of science who could never be accused of sensationalism, let us listen to the deliberate judgement of the late Prof. Huxley:—

"Anyone who is acquainted with the state of the population of all great industrial centres, is aware that amidst a large and increasing body of that population there reigns supreme that condition which the French call *la misère*—a word for which I do not think there is any exact English equivalent. It is a condition in which the food, warmth, clothing which are necessary for the mere maintenance of the functions of the body cannot be obtained; in which men, women, and children are forced to crowd into dens where decency is abolished, and the most ordinary conditions of healthful existence are impossible of attainment; the pleasures within reach are reduced to brutality and drunkenness; the pains accumulate at compound interest in the shape of starvation, disease, stunted growth, and moral degradation; the prospect of even steady and honest industry is often a life of unsuccessful battling with hunger, ended by a pauper's grave. I take it to be a mere plain truth that throughout industrial Europe there is not one single manufacturing city which is free from a vast mass of people whose condition is exactly that described, or from a still greater mass who, living just on the edge of the social

[1] "Bampton Lectures, 1907," pp. 110, 112.

> swamp, are liable at any time to be precipitated into it."

Again; whatever views may be held in politics, the outspoken conviction of Mr. Jos. Chamberlain hereupon, will surely commend itself to every man who heeds religion :—

> "For my part, neither sneers, nor abuse, nor opposition, shall induce me to accept as the will of the Almighty and the unalterable dispensation of His providence a state of things under which millions lead sordid, hopeless, monotonous lives, without pleasure in the present, and without prospect for the future."

And is this a true picture in "Christian" England at the beginning of the twentieth century? If such be the result of nineteen centuries of Christianity, is it any wonder that unbelief not only abounds but raises its voice in strongest protest? But is such human misery due to Christianity? Every honest mind knows that it is not. On the indicated scale, i.e. socially, commercially, politically, nationally, Christianity has never yet been tried. The ecclesiastical systems which in gorgeous apparel and all the swelling pomp of place and pride have masqueraded through the ages in the name of Christ's religion, have for the most part but disgraced it and contradicted Him. The comparatively few noble spirits at whose existence Seeley hints, have been the exceptions who have made lurid the rule. Only slowly, and through the travail of recent centuries, has the true Christ of the Gospels emerged from the welter of theological and ecclesiastical conflict. But if He be anything more than the myth into which some now seek to resolve Him, we know perfectly well what is His mind towards the human society, whether religious or irreligious, which is

content that such abominations should continue as are but faintly outlined in the above quotations. What then, we are driven to ask again, are Churches for, if not to interpret His mind to the world—even though it should necessitate a modern setting of the twenty-third chapter of Matthew's Gospel? Modern populations are surely warranted in inquiring what is the worth of the Christian Church—irrespective of name or sect—if not to bring into actual potent exercise all those principles which are as plain as the light of day, when any real regard is paid to the sympathy of Jesus and the mind of God as the Heavenly Father of all men.

It is verily an easy matter for fluent speakers at Anglican or Free Church conferences, to secure applause through declaiming that we must "stop the tap by reforming individual character". It is on a par with the well-intended but hackneyed and short-sighted avowal, that if only men's souls are saved, and they are genuinely "converted," all else that is desirable will follow. Again it is not true. It neither faces the facts before such conversion, nor the difficulties after. Such sentiments, however pleasing to a well-dressed, well-fed audience, already comfortably provided with homes and incomes, involve tragedies of hindrance, if not impossibility, on the plane of the daily life of myriads in our congested cities and forgotten villages. It is as if some less sensible and sympathetic "good Samaritan," stooping over the victim of cruel violence, had bidden him get up and go home. Whereas from the ground he might truly reply, that he could not get up because his leg was broken; and that he could not go home because he had no home. That would be substantially true to-day of thousands who are as morally innocent as any assembly of clergymen, and are much more unjustly treated. "Give ye them to

eat," said Jesus, when many modern Evangelicals would have simply suggested an inquiry meeting. Of a truth unless there be something more than the provision of shelters, and soup kitchens, and labour yards, even the most strenuous facing of what are called "social problems"—which are at bottom always social wrongs and therefore moral matters, coming necessarily into the programme of Christian ethics—the condition of millions in this incredibly wealthy country will go on to be far worse than that of the hungry crowd which elicited the compassion of Jesus, or the half-murdered victim who so sadly needed a "neighbour". For which reason it is quite as much the spiritual work of the Churches to help on social reform, as it is to labour for the conversion of souls. The old fiction that it is the preacher's work to preach "as a dying man to dying men," should be buried for evermore. Rather is it his privilege and duty, as a living man addressing living men, to assure them in His Master's name of the unmeasured sympathy of God, and call upon the Churches to prove it in practical service of every kind. There is no more contradiction between the spiritual and the social in the work of the Christian Church, than between the two hands of a good workman. "This ought ye to have done," Jesus said, "and not to leave the other undone." If ever such words found application in human affairs, they do so now, in regard to what are sometimes distinguished as the spiritual and social duties of the Church. There is no such distinction in the New Testament. The Church that does not, according to its ability, do both, does neither. The spirituality which exhausts itself in private emotions, or Sunday raptures, or meetings for esoteric fellowship, does not merit the name. Even as Socialism, or any other scheme for social reform, is alike unworthy and impossible,

without the new heart of love upon which Christian spirituality puts prime emphasis.

Is it then, one may ask, the duty of the Christian Church to initiate and carry through a definite social programme, or political campaign? And the plain answer is—Certainly not. No such consequence flows from the recognition of the all-comprehending sympathy of the Christ spirit. Jesus Himself was neither politician nor Socialist, in the technical sense which those words have now acquired. But he was both, when their deeper significance is recognized. For the ultimate aim of the principles which He inculcated can only be truthfully described as the greatest blessing of the greatest number. Whence it comes to pass that the Church which really acts upon His commands, has more to do with the total welfare of mankind than any other corporate body of men on earth; and has a function to discharge which is quite unique and inimitable. Its unlimited concern for the utmost well-being of humanity cannot but follow from its acknowledgment of the dignity of man's nature as a moral being; from its belief in the Fatherhood of God, with the consequent brotherhood of men; from its acceptance of Christ's ideal of a Kingdom of Heaven on earth with justice, peace, and gladness, for all mankind; from its assurance that there is a nobler life to come for which each should have full chance of training here. In view of such a nature, such capacity, such destiny, the oppressions and wrongs, the cruelties and degradations of civilization, become correspondingly more monstrous and intolerable than they can possibly be on any other estimate. The very fact, moreover, that Christ and His Apostles inculcated no political or social programme, makes it possible for the Christian Church to adapt itself to the environment of any age. It is, therefore, entirely without

excuse if it does not exercise its utmost influence in all directions, towards bringing to pass the highest good for every child of man.

Whether a Christian man—or Church—regards Collectivism as the best social theory or not, must be left to his own judgement. But just as the First Great Command binds him also to the Second, so does the Second bind him to find some method which shall be the best that he can conceive, for fulfilling its behest in becoming "neighbour," as Christ interpreted it, to his fellow-man in need.

Most of the great social evils of our day are so deep-rooted in human nature's evil tendencies, and complicated by mighty vested interests and obstinate old customs, as well as downright sins against light and love, that the radically corrective measures which alone can cure them, must proceed slowly. Evolution, not revolution, is the only way of regeneration for human society. But a very wide field of service opens out for the Christian Church, in present practical sympathy with the sinful and suffering and needy. To refer to this as "merely palliative," is but prejudiced mockery. Even if the very best schemes for social reconstruction that the ablest men can devise, were to be urged on by the most unselfish Christian devotion emanating from all the Churches united, yet time is required, when all the innumerable complications and hindrances are considered. It is all too plain that a long time must elapse before anything like a social Millennium can be attained. Whilst, then, society is being reconstructed, what is to become of the individual men and women and children who now actually constitute the sad host of the "submerged tenth," and the "yet greater mass" of whom Prof. Huxley spoke?

Whatever may be done by amended Poor Laws, or by private charity, the answer for Christian

Churches is that besides being depositories of truth and schools of character, they must also be—each according to its own environment—a refuge, a hospital, a home, for all who are weary and heavy laden, whether they are suffering through sin, or crushed in the ruthless modern struggle. In these respects, the record of the Churches is happily cheering, and present-day facts are inspiring. For be the faults of the Christian Church what they may, as a spiritual institution, it is in this practical regard not only without reproach, but without parallel. The Christian Churches of this land are even now doing in one week—in actual relief of the needy, comfort of the distressed, feeding of the hungry, support of the weak, rescue of the fallen, etc.—more than all unbelief, as such, has done in all its history. The innumerable philanthropic activities of the great Missions now established in almost all our large cities, are not merely unprecedented in history, but fraught with incalculable results of help and blessing. There are very few Churches indeed which have not an honourable share in such a genuine "service of man".[1] The only real failure here from

[1] Of all the flippant falsities served up for popular anti-Christian consumption by the cheap press of to-day, perhaps none are more conspicuous than these: "Christianity concerns itself with God and man, putting God first and man last." "The Christian religion divides its services between man and God." "Christians give a great deal more attention to God than to man" ("God and My Neighbour," p. 190). A child's knowledge of the New Testament suffices to answer such gibes. And yet if we must be honest, such misrepresentation is no worse than that which sometimes emanates from Christian sources. Just recently, for instance, Dr. Inge, as Dean of St. Paul's, in a lecture on "The co-operation of the Church with the spirit of the age," has had the hardihood to declare in public that "Socialism always assumes that it was the sty that made the pig, whilst Christianity declared that the pig made the sty". Here the falsity of the assertion in regard to Socialism, is only equalled by unwarranted attribution to Christianity of cold-blooded indifference to

the truly Christian ideal, is that in every Church such good Samaritan work is done by the few. The many only do it by proxy. Hence, neither the quantity nor the quality of the Church's mission of compassion is what it ought to be, might be, and would be, if all who are called Christians were true to their avowed principles. The little we can here point out on this great theme cannot better close than with a couple of sentences more from the Bampton Lectures already so often quoted.

> "If all the men and women who call themselves Christians could simply do the good they know, and eschew the evil they know, for Christ's sake, the aspect of social and economic problems would be so changed that we have no right to suppose that they would remain insoluble. . . . But that we may be fit to take our part there is one thing needful; if we are to help at all in making the world Christian we must first be really Christians ourselves; and I fear there is no doubt that for most of us, for all except a very few, that means we must become Christians."

4. The largest hope.

But whatever the politician and social reformer may do, neither human nature nor the Christian

heredity and environment. And then dignitaries of the Church—all in comfortable circumstances—wonder why the "masses" do not attend public worship. Are they likely to be moved in that direction by this Anglican clergyman's further sneer at "that rather tortuous and greasy instrument of party politics, the Nonconformist conscience"? When one remembers how that name arose, and what principles in modern social life have been maintained under its auspices, the spectacle of a Christian teacher publicly jeering at it, smites one with despair. Surely of all philosophies ever presented to the human mind, Christianity has most reason to cry "Save me from my friends!" (Surely the term "greasy" above, must be a reporter's error.)

Church can end here. Human life we know well is in itself, at best and longest, but infinitesimal. Yet is each individual consciousness so unique, so unfathomable, so precious to its possessor, that the question of the ages is to-day as real and as insistent as ever—does death end all? What is to be the ultimate result of all our anxiety, and effort, and conflict, in this transitory condition of being? If a man die, shall he live again? Or shall he be no more than a mere clutcher of this life's iridescent bubbles? Must we accept those counsels of despair concerning "thanatism," which have so recently passed beyond the stage of agnostic submission to fate into bald denial of any higher hope and coarse insult to every nobler instinct? Modern Haeckelian Monism informs us, in strident tones, not only that at death our whole being becomes extinct, but that we ought to be grateful for being delivered from "the menace" of personal immortality! The Christian Church, at all events, will not hesitate to reply that such "thanatism" is no less impertinent in face of modern psychological developments, than it is ruled out of thought by all the sanctions of the Gospel of Christ. As Christians we listen to such dogmatic dicta of godless science and anti-Christian philosophy as we do to the wanderings of the demented, or the ravings of a demagogue, with pity but without fear.

In the light of true science, normal self-consciousness joins with Christian belief to endorse the protests of our noblest poets. Bearing in mind what has already been advanced on this theme in preceding sections, there is only need here to point out that in this respect the Christian Churches hold a commission distinct from and beyond every other religion or philosophy on earth. "I am come"—said the Christ of the Gospels—"that they may have life, and may

have it abundantly." Death can no more put a limit to that "abundantly," than the glass of our windows prevent the light from entering. It is true that none of His words make any attempt to express that future life in terms of this. Our curiosity, be it ever so reverent, or tender, or scientific, remains ungratified. But the Christian hope is none the less sure and steadfast. It is as unmistakable as indefinable. As the truth concerning God and moral freedom is absolutely essential to the highest value and noblest possibilities of this life, so is the assurance of immortality, to which also the Christian Church bears witness, equally necessary, if all the past and present together are to be anything more than a cruelly mocking fiasco. No truer word has ever been uttered than the Apostle's avowal—"By hope are we saved".

For such a hope beyond the grave, human nature has ever groped in a myriad pathetic ways; from the Book of the Dead in ancient Egypt, to the eager Spiritism and earnest Psychical Research of our own day. But all that is worth holding in the religions of the past, or the occult philosophies of the present, is included in the promise of the Gospel of Jesus for which the Churches stand. Not that their witness is even yet as worthy as it might be. They have much to unlearn as well as to learn herein. But in spite of all the hindrances of conventional notions and popular theology, the vision of the future has wonderfully cleared during the last half century. And the blessed hope which it is equally the privilege and duty of the Churches to make known, is less and less obscured by narrow and foolish literalisms on the brighter side, or by ghastly and repulsive realism on the darker.

Such a hope, unmarred by childishness, for all who love the light, and such warning, untainted with

malignity, for those who prefer moral darkness, were never so much needed as now. The more valuable life becomes to all our fellow-men, through social regeneration which shall give to every one a fair opportunity to enjoy and make good use of it, the more utterly inadequate become all the schemes and systems which have absolutely nothing to promise at its close but a coffin, or cremation. All the fine speech about joining "the choir invisible," or being "resorbed once more into the great Over-Soul," is to the human heart but as the mocking mirage of the desert to the despairing traveller. There is nothing in it but self-delusion. In plain prose it amounts to a promise that, one day, *I* shall cease to be. Which is exactly, as Huxley felt, what the present normal, healthy, "I," most of all deprecates. The wider range of the human intellect, the quickened sensitiveness of nature associated with higher education, the growing pressure of social problems, and the utter inexplicableness of many of life's individual mysteries of pain, all combine to make a reliable hope concerning the hereafter something which in very deed men "cannot do without". From the barren outlook of annihilation which could not but depress all who have made life worth living, as well as from the hopeless heartache which would crush us concerning loved ones for ever lost, the Gospel of Jesus comes to save all the children of fear and sorrow.

In wise and earnest faithfulness to such a commission of hope, the Christian Church confirms and crowns all other reasons men may have for believing that death does not end all. The past mistakes of eschatology may all be conceded—to quote Prof. Seeley again—"without conceding for a moment that the world can do without Christ and His church" —as regards the life to come. He is the risen Lord

of life—the eternal proof that "life shall live for evermore". Never was water more welcome to the thirst-worn traveller than His assuring words of comfort and hope to troubled minds and sorrowing hearts. What human nature craves above all else in regard to the mystery beyond the grave, is a worthy and reliable hope. This it is the high privilege of the Christian Church to give mankind, in never-ceasing reiteration of its Master's words—"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Believe in God; believe also in Me."

Here then, finally, we find the fourfold function of the Catholic Church of Christ, which cannot but justify itself to men in proportion as it is faithfully fulfilled. Amidst all the rush and crush of our modern life, in the very thick of its conflicting interests and excitements, in spite of all the most cynical as well as honest criticism, in face of the whole crowd of oppositions alike from most refined and coarsest quarters, Christian Churches stand for the earnest teaching of the highest truths; for the development of the very noblest character; for the measureless and universal application of the brotherly sympathy which should issue from such character; and for the blessed assurance of a worthy and valid hope when the whole death-ending human episode shall have passed away.

Such a commission transcends all the claims of science, the delights of art, the fascinations of literature, the advantages of commerce, and the demands of sociology. All that is required in order to manifest its inestimable value to humanity, is that the Churches should be faithful to it. This resolves itself, manifestly, into the question which must here be left to every believer's own conscience—If such be the worth of the Church to the world, what am

I worth to the Church? The great principle which just now needs to be made clear above all else, is that whilst the world of mankind needs such a Kingdom of Heaven as is here betokened more and more every generation, its coming is not waiting for God, but for men and women after God's own heart. It is not waiting for theologies, or conventions, or conferences, or revivals, but for the average man and woman, who, bearing Christ's name, is also His faithful witness. The dignity and value which such an opportunity puts upon even the humblest life, as well as the responsibility resting upon the richly endowed, are simply immeasurable. What are money, and civic position, and political influence, and worldly sensationalism, compared with the inspiring assurance that one's life is actually spreading sweetness and light, truth and goodness, sympathy and hope, amongst one's fellows? And assuredly when the call which admits of no refusal comes, bidding each let go everything here that seems now so precious, what other hope or comfort will be worth mention beside the whisper of the voice Divine—"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"?

WHAT IS THE REVIVAL MOST NEEDED IN MODERN CHRISTENDOM?

"The relative impotence of the Church in contemporary society is deeply to be regretted. No lover of Christianity can let it persist without protest. The sacrosanct manner in the pulpit and in the pew, coupled with the tyranny of traditional views, and the staleness of conventional language, have in no small measure brought it to pass that the Church is to-day suffering in her comparative powerlessness a punishment which should have been visited only upon sheer insincerity."

—W. F. Osborne, "The Faith of a Layman".

"It is useless to evoke the fine faculty of faith unless we can also provide for it a solid base in reason. Emotional conversions must always be liable to contrary gusts of feeling, and subject to that law of instability which governs all emotion. It is only when we unite emotions with thorough intellectual conviction that we reach an impregnable foundation for the Christian life. Hence I have striven during my whole ministry to obtain the entire assent of the mind as well as of the heart, to the Masterhood of Jesus Christ in human life."

—W. J. Dawson, "The Divine Challenge".

"Facile belief is of but little value; it often only means that as certain words make no impression whatever upon the mind, so they excite no opposition in it. There are few things which Christ would have visited with sterner censure, than that short-cut to belief which consists of abandonment of mental effort."

—Sir Oliver Lodge, Pref. to "Ecce Homo".

"To attempt to bar out criticism by affirming inspiration, is a futile enterprise. The day for that is past. You cannot now do it. Men will for themselves inquire, and will test the accuracy of the Gospels because they are resolved to know the truth. For let us make no mistake; the freest inquiry is the only possible path to sound conviction. God's world is a world of progress, the tide is now flowing, and he who stiffly clings to his old moorings will inevitably be swamped."

—Dr. Marcus Dods, "The Bible: its Nature and Origin".

"If any new principle is to gain power in human history, it must take shape and life in individuals who have faith in it. The men of faith are the living spirits, the channels by which new truth and power from God enter into humanity. The fundamental contribution of every man is the change of his personality. The ministry in particular must apply the teaching functions of the pulpit to the pressing questions of public morality. They must lift social questions to a religious level by faith and spiritual insight. The larger the number of ministers who attempt these untrodden ways, the safer and saner will be those who follow."

—Prof. Rauschenbusch, "Christianity and the Social Crisis".

CHAPTER X

WHAT IS THE REVIVAL MOST NEEDED IN MODERN CHRISTENDOM?

No thoughtful Christian can possibly be satisfied with the present condition and apparent prospect of Christianity. He may be far removed from pessimism, or even depression, and may cultivate cheerfulness by reason of the immeasurable amount of unquestionable good existing and growing in every section of the Catholic Church. He knows how, when every Church is viewed from the inside, there is ever more than enough to set off against cynical criticisms from the outside. Viewed in itself, and compared with generations past, Christianity has every reason to thank God and take courage. There are to-day more Christians than ever before; their whole spirit and demeanour, taken as a whole, is worthier than ever, and nearer to the mind of Christ as portrayed in the New Testament; Christian theology is being purified and enlarged; Christian philanthropy at home is broader and more practical; zeal for missions in other lands has developed to an unprecedented extent; Sunday schools are being overhauled and improved in every respect; new and costly buildings are springing up everywhere, fitted with all modern appliances and conveniences; whilst by the confession of one of their bitterest opponents the Churches have "the unswerving trust and confidence of millions of honest and worthy citizens".

This being but an imperfect summary of what might truthfully be stated hereupon, Christian believers

can afford to smile at the offers so often made by unbelievers, to ring the curfew bell for Christianity. If, indeed, it were necessary to seek volunteers to ring the knell of the Christian faith, no doubt many would be eagerly ready to oblige. But their services are not required. They are, as a matter of fact, less likely to be called for than ever. Prof. Seeley's famous question "Has Christ failed, or can Christianity die?" meets with a negative reply which is growing in force with every succeeding generation. The many diversities of conviction, differences in ritual, varieties of Church government, conflicts about new theology, struggles for educational rights and opportunities, however sometimes regrettable, are yet signs of life, not death. They indicate vitality, not decay. Whatever may sometimes be lamentable in their developments, at least they are like volcanic eruptions in pointing to unmeasured energy, they are proofs of a latent power which provokes fear even when it does not win approval. Those eager modern spirits, therefore, who are so anxious to assist at the obsequies of all the Christian Churches, would be well advised to look for some more promising occupation. Christianity, in a word, was never less likely to come to an end, than it is as we advance into the present century.

Having said this much, and said it deliberately, the way is open, without affording any sensible reason for flinging about charges of "pessimism" or "alarmism" or "depression," to consider frankly the other side. For there are, to any instructed Christian mind, quite as real reasons for anxiety in these days, as for thankfulness. Even if, regarded absolutely, Christianity is a greater success than ever, it is no less true that, regarded relatively, it is a greater failure than ever. What, for instance, is the meaning of this title to the series of lectures

above-mentioned, delivered, as already indicated, at St. Mary's, Oxford, by a devoted clergyman, in the very midst of the strongest associations of conservative ecclesiasticism?—

> "The Reproach of the Gospel—an inquiry into the apparent failure of Christianity as a rule of life and conduct, with special reference to the present time."

If such an estimate came from some well-known quarters where everything Christian is execrated, it would be easily comprehensible. But one is driven to fear that there must be some grave causes for anxiety, when such avowals and such confessions come openly from out of the very heart of the Christian Church.

The fear indicated is only too well grounded in facts. Reasons for "reproach" in connexion with the Christian Gospel, even in modern England, are indeed not far to seek. They may be stated with a brevity which is sufficiently significant without elaboration. In spite of all the wealth and influence as well as unceasing devotion represented by the Churches, there can be no doubt that, to a very real extent, Christian progress is arrested. In all the Free Churches membership shows persistent decrease when there should be large increase. In the Anglican Church membership is not tabulated, but in all its services there is a marked and increasing absence of men; whilst speaking for all the Churches and the whole country, public worship is more and more ignored by the modern population. The new buildings which are continually being erected in the suburbs are very far from being filled with worshippers. Also, they almost always represent an older, and generally larger, forsaken building in the centre of the city. Although large numbers are

gathered together weekly in most of our great cities, in spacious Mission Halls under the auspices of Wesleyan Methodism, the main plain fact remains that four-fifths of the adult population of this most Christian country in the world, are entirely outside the Churches, and for the most part content to be so.

Out of the seven millions of human beings now belonging to London, it is carefully computed that less than one million are in any way connected with the Christian Church. The proportion of the "working classes" in all the other large city centres, who treat the Christian faith as entirely a matter of option, or a middle-class luxury, is undoubtedly the same. Social unrest is a commonplace of the hour. It is not more actual than timely. The conditions under which vast numbers of our fellow-citizens have to live, are simply an abomination in the sight of God and man. But men who are rightly most restless in claiming justice rather than charity, have come to feel that Christian Churches, as a whole, have shown them little practical sympathy in their conflict. Their natural inference is that in contending for what is due to them, and struggling for opportunity to make this life worth living, the Gospel of Christ as presented by organized Churches is of little or no service to them. Consequently, religion forms no part of their programme, and Christian sanctions are to them much the same as museum curiosities.

Meanwhile, the modern atmosphere, intellectually, scientifically, philosophically, is, at the very least, not calculated to help to fill the churches. True, the crass materialism of the last half of the nineteenth century has spent itself, and a spiritual monism much nearer to Christian philosophy is at present in vogue. But it is far removed from the assumptions of ordinary Christian teaching. The three great

postulates of Christian belief, God, freedom, and immortality, are more openly challenged than ever before. When philosophers of the calibre of Dr. Jas. Ward frankly follow Kant in declaring "the futility of the ontological, the teleological, the cosmological proofs of the existence of a God"—those who have eyes will see what influences are operating on the better educated in these respects. But this is a day above all of cheap printing and publishing; and of this fact unbelief has taken definitely fuller advantage than belief. Thanks to sixpenny reprints, and penny, or halfpenny journalism, the so-called "determinism"—which is fathered by the Hegelian Professor at Cambridge, not to mention others—is spiced up afresh and scattered broadcast at popular prices, so that the man in the street is emphatically assured that thanks to heredity and environment, he cannot help anything he does, and therefore may cast moral responsibility to the winds.[1] There is then, of course, "no such thing as sin," and "Christianity is a tissue of absurdities built upon a foundation of errors". Immortality thus becomes nothing more than a pious fantasy, no more deserving serious thought than a midsummer night's dream. The extent to which these uncompromising and contemptuous dismissals of everything Christian have been diffused during the last quarter of a century, is greatly underrated by the Churches. They have in this regard for the most part played the policy of the ostrich—with the natural results. Those who are willing to face the actual facts, know well that it is not social unrest alone but also intellectual and theological unrest, which is working with ever in-

[1] For detailed proof of this, see the writer's "Guilty," a reply to "Not Guilty," by Mr. R. Blatchford, and "Determinism—False and True" (C. Kelly).

creasing force in the opposite direction to Christian faith and worship.

Mention has also to be made of the undeniable development of the popular craving for amusements, whether in the shape of Theatres for the well-to-do, or Picture Palaces for the poor, along with the foot-ball craze—it cannot truthfully be called anything else—which fills numberless columns in all the news-papers of the land. It must not, however, be for-gotten that this whole hanker for amusement has a pitiful side to it. To an unmeasured extent it repre-sents reaction from the ruthless fight of modern industrial conditions. Prof. Huxley said only too truly that, in myriads of cases of men and women who fill our congested cities, "the only pleasures within reach are brutality and drunkenness". If cheap music halls and picture shows make some-thing even a little better than these possible, they are not wholly evils. There can be no honest doubt that the weary, dreary, hopeless monotony of much daily toil, and the prolonged hours of labour which competition in many trades makes inevitable, leave the human beings who are to-day's white slaves physically exhausted. In such condition they are little disposed, either in body or mind, to attend to religious matters, or appreciate the call to character-building which Christianity makes upon them.

All these items thus briefly enumerated are not merely true, but operative in our midst as never before in human history. When to their definitely anti-Christian influence is added the action, within the pale of the Churches, of those irresistible and unsettling forces which are known as the Higher Criticism, Mythological research, Comparative re-ligion, and the New Theology, the seriousness of the outlook from the standpoint of Evangelical re-

ligion is too manifest to need comment. The general acceptance, moreover, of the principle of evolution on the part of Christian teachers,[1] has brought as real difficulties in some directions as relief in others. The frontal attacks of nineteenth century materialism, after all, were less dangerous to Christian beliefs than the insidious flank movements of Naturalism and Agnosticism. The giving up of special creation leaves us yet, as Mr. Mallock has truly said, in presence of the "crux of theism," when the relations between evolution and individual men and women are fairly faced.

Enough, however, has here been intimated to confirm the truth of the opening sentence of this section. It is not pessimism, therefore, but wisdom and honesty combined, which bid us, as Christians, ask what are we to be, or to do, in response to such unmistakable signs of the times? In reply, it is generally affirmed that what is wanted is a "real revival of religion". But that phrase may mean something or nothing, genuine Christian devotion or fanatic folly, according to its interpretation. The term "revival" may, indeed, be permitted, as being both common and suggestive. But if it is to be at all applicable to the modern situation, it must con-

[1] Though this is by no means always the case. A book already mentioned which has passed through several editions, and reached a circulation of 50,000, roundly declares, in the name of the only true Christianity, that "The operation of the law of evolution is rigidly limited to the circle of the activities of the descendants of Adam. Within that circle everything without exception is subject to evolutionary changes. Outside of it there is not a trace of such changes" ("The World and its God," by P. Mauro). Of course the only serious feature of such printing as this, is that numbers of uninstructed religious people will both read and believe it, and then represent Christianity on such lines to the average artisan. Meanwhile he is being continually better informed, and so will reject at once and altogether the Christianity which is pledged to such dogmatic falsity.

note much more than is generally understood by it. Five main features, at least, have to be distinctly recognized, if such a suggested remedy is to meet the Christian need of this generation.

1. The first of these is to the effect that any revival of religion which is to be real and effective to-day must be comprehensive. Revivalism, as ordinarily understood, means emotionalism, and in not a few cases little more. In the best instances certainly the stirred emotion may be said to be dynamic, and may bring to pass moral decisions and changes which long remain in force. How far each of these possibilities actually accompanied the much-discussed recent "revival" in Wales, need not here be decided. The point is that, even taken at its best, the Welsh revival is not the true type of what is needed by modern Christianity. It is not nearly comprehensive enough. There is no need whatever to underrate the good accomplished when the spiritual fervour of the Church is quickened; when backsliders are brought once more into the fold; when superficial hearers are led to conviction; when drunkards, thieves, wife-beaters, and all such, are transformed into worthy characters. But all these results, estimated at their highest and utmost, represent but a portion of the significance of Christianity for this age, and consequent mission of Christian Churches. "You have nothing to do but to save souls," said John Wesley to his early helpers. But that ideal, taken in crass literalness, would be as false to the Gospel of Jesus as it may be true when comprehensively interpreted. Such a phrase as "soul-saving," we know, was never on the lips of Jesus Himself. Nor did the Apostles ever use it in any such narrow, or pietistic, or future sense as would ignore the practical breadth of their Master's own statement

of His mission. When He declared to the eager crowd in the synagogue at Nazareth—"To-day is this Scripture fulfilled in your hearing," it was after reading to them one of the most comprehensive of the utterances of Isaiah :—

> The spirit of the Lord is upon me,
> Because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor,
> He has sent me to proclaim release to captives,
> And recovery of sight to the blind,
> To set at liberty those whom tyranny has crushed,
> To proclaim the year of acceptance with the Lord.

And that this was no mere passing vision, is witnessed by all His other teaching which is so vividly summarized by Matthew's record, when it claims on His behalf that He also fulfilled other glowing words of the same prophet :—

> This is my Servant whom I have chosen,
> My Beloved in whom my soul delights ;
> I will breathe my spirit upon him,
> And he will announce justice to the nations.
> He will not wrangle nor cry aloud,
> Nor will his voice be heard in the streets.
> A crushed reed will he not break,
> Nor will he quench the smouldering wick,
> Until he has led on justice to victory:
> And on his name shall the nations rest their hopes.

One cannot doubt that it was with full knowledge of such a claim on His Master's behalf, that the Apostle Paul wrote so emphatically, in the midst of his plea for breadth of charity,[1] that "The kingdom of God does not consist of eating and drinking, but of right conduct and peace and joy, through the Holy Spirit".

Can it be questioned that the lack of this practical and social breadth, the sincere but mistaken narrowing of Christian faith to "purely spiritual" matters,

[1] Rom. XIV.

has been and is one of the main causes of the generally acknowledged defection from the Churches at the present time? Dean Moore Ede certainly put the case as trenchantly as truly, in his valuable Hulsean Lectures for 1895:—

> "The great complaint of the masses is that the Church is so taken up with the concerns of the world to come, and with theological doctrines and ritual, that it is of little use in helping to make this world brighter and better. This is one great reason for their alienation from the Church. If we be honest, we must admit there is some justice in the complaint. Christ revealed God, but in that revelation He laid very little stress on the mystery of the Godhead; He laid great stress on the brotherly relations which should exist among men as a consequence of belief in the Fatherhood of God. The Church has said a great deal about the mystery of the Godhead, and comparatively little about manifesting a brotherly spirit in all our dealings with our fellow-men. It is much easier to be interested in speculative views as to the nature of Deity, much easier to observe forms of devotion, much easier to give money or build Churches, than to manifest love to our fellows in the acts of daily life, in buying, selling, and getting gain. The Pharisees of old made long prayers and then defrauded widows. There is too much truth in the saying that in our day, men are willing to offer their prayers and praise on Sunday, if on Monday they may go into the market place and skin their fellows and sell their hides."[1]

[1] "The Church and Town Problems," pp. 21-23.

Hence the ordinary "revival of religion" is good so far as it goes, but does not go far enough. It is individual, spiritual, corrective. This is unquestionably a good and necessary beginning, even as the beginning of life is necessarily birth, and the renewal of life after disease is necessarily bodily health. But life is more than birth, and renewed health means resumed work of all kinds. So if the Kingdom of Heaven is ever to come on earth, there will have to be not only the individual, spiritual, corrective element, in renewed religious lives, but also the practical, social, educative element in equal measure, extending in all directions. The prayer so often on the lips of worshipping congregations, needs to be very much more in their heads and hearts. "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" covers a vast deal more than the return of prodigals, or the sobering of drunkards, or the addition of members to Churches. It can never mean less than the development of all Church members in the principles of Christian altruism. It is very well to recite often in a public liturgy, that—"When the wicked man turneth away from the wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive". But it is to be feared that the words are little thought about. Or else the question would demand answer—what then? When he has so far "saved his soul alive," what is it but the call to service? How can it mean other than both duty and opportunity to obey the command "Go and do thou likewise," and play the good Samaritan to all who need such help. The miseries brought about in modern civilization by evil heredity and environment, are much more terrible than the robbery of a traveller on the road to Jericho. The need of counteracting their dire influence and turn-

ing it into good, comes quite as necessarily into the programme of religious revival, as the building of churches or Mission halls into that of Christian work. The frightfully anti-Christian, immoral, degrading influence of very much modern environment, can only be ignored by those who are wilfully blind or selfishly indifferent. The lesson on which the Churches lay such stress, viz. that character can greatly influence and even triumph over environment, is true indeed. But it is not more true than the converse; viz. the influence of environment upon character. We may not forget the impressive words of our earnest Bampton Lecturer above referred to, that—

> "The poor of London have been thrust and are kept by a society which till lately called itself Christian, into conditions of life which make the preaching of the Gospel to them a mockery.—It is the moral degradation, the spiritual hardening of these our brethren, that is the deadly evil, the burning reproach to a Christian civilization."

How far this is also true of every other large city, and by no means infrequent in our country districts, those who choose may soon see for themselves. Take just one vivid specimen from the recent report of the lady sanitary inspector at Bradford:—

> "In regard to one back-to-back house consisting of one bedroom and a kitchen, the inspector states that it was occupied by a mother, two adult daughters, a son, and two illegitimate children. The whole family were living and sleeping in the kitchen, and all sleeping in the same bed. The habits of the people were of the most depraved description. . . . In another house there was no bedstead of any kind, the

only bedding being an old straw mattress on which slept two parents and seven children, their only covering the old clothes worn during the day."

Such an inferno alas, is but typical of myriads more. To be appreciated, these have to be put side by side with other facts which are equally typical. Mark this, for instance, taken from to-day's newspaper :—

"A well-known furrier remarked to me this week : 'I do not remember any winter in which more expensive furs were generally worn. Coming out of a theatre the other night, I saw a lady wearing a sable coat reaching to the hem of the dress, which certainly would not have cost less than two thousand guineas.'"

No revival of religion which does not face such ghastly extremes as these, and oppose them as sternly as Amos or Isaiah would have done, but with as much more tenderness for the suffering and severity for the selfish as Jesus exemplified, will suffice for the coming age. It will assuredly not be enough for well-dressed, well-fed, well-housed congregations to gather and sing their conventional "Magnificat" :—

"The hungry He hath filled with good things,
But the rich He hath sent empty away"—

and then treat it with no more practical regard than the sentimental ditty of a music hall. The disinherited masses of the people have had far more than enough of such verbal mockery. If a truly converted man is expected after a revival to become a living and active member of some Christian Church, so must the Church itself become a living and active influence in human society. It must put itself to pains to count as a definite and potent force on behalf

of justice, no less than an effective school of charity, or a "successful mission". When the "out-of-works" in a recent city procession flaunted the banner "Curse your charity"—no doubt some fine ladies clad in sables were shocked at their rudeness. But if the same fine ladies, and gentlemen to match, could but be made to change places with the objects of their scorn for one twelvemonth, it would not only be a wholesome experience for the idle rich, but make clear the difference between the justice to which every man has right, and the charity of which no one should have need. Upon this difference Bishop Gore has spoken manful words which plainly indicate the kind of revival in the name of religion that alone will draw the people to the Churches.

> "The principle of justice is one which is not approximately realized in what we call Christian society at present. There are comparatively few men who have any real opportunity of work and remuneration according to their faculties, of spiritual knowledge, of legitimate education, physical and moral. Until that is secured, until the principle of justice is acknowledged and acted on, all philanthropic effort which teaches contentment, which aims chiefly at the maintenance of the established social order, and has not for its purpose a permanent moral improvement, is a wrong to the poor and a specious anodyne for the consciences of the rich."

The pious notion which so largely yet prevails, that Christian Churches only exist to form folds of safety for guileless sheep, is worse than childish. The sheep metaphor has been considerably over-employed. If taken from Christ's words, it must at least include such other sayings of His as these—"He who has My commandments and keeps them,

he it is that loves Me".—"Not every one who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father."

The fulfilment of this ideal will demand a great enlargement of what has hitherto been conceived as a revival of religion. For it will mean not merely the purification and ennoblement of the individual in his personal and domestic relations, which is already well understood, but also the clearer apprehension and faithful discharge of all his civic, social, commercial, and political responsibilities. Unfortunately, at present, there is sinister agreement between believers and unbelievers as to the smallness of this country's right to be called Christian. Says the virulent opponent of everything Christian:—

> "I mentally apostrophize the Christian British people. 'Ladies and gentlemen,' I say, 'you are Christian in name, but I discern little of Christ in your ideals, your institutions, or your daily lives. If to praise Christ in words and deny Him in deeds, be Christianity, then London is a Christian city and England is a Christian nation. For it is very evident that our common English ideals are anti-Christian, and that our commercial, foreign, and social affairs are run on anti-Christian lines."[1]

Whilst the earnest preacher from the pulpit of St. Mary's, Oxford, declares:—

> "We are forced to admit that after nineteen hundred years of Christianity, whatever may be the case with individuals, society at present is certainly not Christian; not Christian in its aims and methods; not Christian in its judgments. There is no more striking instance of

[1] "God and My Neighbour," p. ix.

this opposition, than the value it sets upon riches and poverty."[1]

The revival which is needed throughout the Churches is one which will reverse all this, and make Great Britain to be a truly Christian nation. The Kingdom of Heaven hereafter may be well left to the judgement and love of God. Its significance is enhanced, not lessened, by so-doing. It is no more possible than necessary for us to forecast it in detail. Its certain uncertainty is more than enough for faith and hope, as well as for solemn warning. The establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth, and the consequent leavening of civilization with justice and sympathy and brotherly love, is the revival needed, if Christianity is to justify its claim to be a Gospel to humanity. In addition to all the individual penitence and faith and holiness which the First great command of Jesus has in view, the Second would ensure to Europe and humanity what all the "armed peace" of politics and elaborate schemes of sociology have failed to accomplish.

Nation with nation, land with land,
Unarmed shall live as comrades free,
In every heart and brain shall throb
The pulse of one fraternity.

Man shall love man with heart as pure
And tender as the Christ of old,
Instead of feud 'twixt rich and poor,
Shall each serve all with joy untold.

New arts shall bloom of loftier mould,
And mightier music thrill the skies;
And every life shall be a song,
When all the earth is Paradise.[2]

[1] "Bampton Lectures for 1907," p. 107.

[2] One of the happy signs of the times, from the Christian standpoint, is the occurrence of the noble hymn of Mr. Addington Symonds in The Methodist Hymn Book, No. 980. A quarter of a century ago it would certainly have been excluded.

2. With the above in view, it is abundantly plain that another characteristic of the revival that is most needed is permanence. It is most common as well as true to speak of "a wave" of revival. Therein lies quite as much its failure as its measure of success. It comes—and goes. Even if it brought all and only good, its transience would be fatal to its sufficiency. In all that makes for righteousness, alike in an individual, a family, a nation, what is needed is not transience but permanence. The good is wanted not only to come, but to stay. Even if the wave became a tide, it would still far from suffice. For tides ebb as well as flow; and the ebb may mean more disaster than the flow benediction. The parable of the Master hereupon, has had tragic confirmation in the history of men and nations.[1]

The ordinary conception of the need for revival is contained in the suggestion of the word itself, as a kind of recovery from fainting. But this is not the Christian need of the hour. What is required is growth, as of a stunted child, rather than the coming round of an adult who has lost consciousness. The Churches have not fainted; they are not fainting; they are failing. The failure is not due to such a temporary suspension of animation as may be ended by a galvanic shock of emotion. It is due to lack of development, even as the inability of the Chinese woman to walk properly, was brought about not by muscular failure but by the prevention of growth. It has been said only too truly that the "influence of Christianity on mankind at large is and has been strangely disproportionate to the reasonable expectation of those who saw its beginnings". The main reason is not far to seek. It has been "cribb'd, cabined, and confined" by swaddling bands of ecclesi-

[1] "When the evil spirit is gone out of a man, etc." (Matt. XII. 44).

asticism, Augustinian theology, and popular conventions, which have prevented its natural and spiritual expansion and left it crippled for its great mission to humanity. What is wanted now more than ever heretofore, is some such word of power as Jesus uttered by the grave of Lazarus—"Loose him, and let him go". Growth in mind, growth in heart, growth in sympathy, in scope, in effort, are the main elements of permanence in any Christian revival adequate to the needs of the twentieth century.

The vast increase in our modern populations makes this unmistakable. For as in any family, the birth of each child means a prospective addition to the happiness or misery of the whole, so does every personality added to the census mean either a storm centre of evil or a focus of sweetness and light. All that is best, or worst, in modern civilisation, emanates from human personalities. These, therefore, must be affected, if any Golden Age is ever to draw nigh. But such moulding of personalities is earth's greatest problem. The only certainty that emerges out of all the failures of the past, is that for such a purpose there is need of a process which is much more than, or at least a distinct addition to, any sudden shock. Saul did not become Paul through the flash from heaven on the Damascus road. The explanation of the great transition which proved so permanent, is rather found in his own words—"but I went away into Arabia, and again I returned to Damascus". So generally; a revival that is merely an emotional beginning, would never have established Christianity at the outset. Assuredly to-day, amidst all the ferment of modern life and the enormous multiplication of human activities, no "Pentecost" will avail which is not followed, even more than in the first century, by corresponding universal, thorough, patient, practical, persistent devotion. Lightning flashes may serve

to show the way in the thick darkness of a storm, but they will neither ripen the corn nor paint the flowers. And as of old the Roman Empire was won for Christ, not by the overflowing emotion alone which found its sensational vent in the gift of tongues, but in the abiding faithfulness of Christian principles on the part of genuine believers, even in spite of deadliest opposition,[1] so must it be in our modern midst. The revival most needed is but little helped by Congresses, Conventions, Conferences, Missions, and the like; except so far as these are accompanied and followed by broad, practical, thorough-going, permanent sympathy. A well-known leader in the Evangelical Churches said on a recent public occasion:—

> "My judgement is that before we are going to have a widespread revival of religion, there will have to be a squaring and a settling up of the relations between employers and employed; between masters and men. We cannot expect sweated people whose governors and paymasters attend a place of worship, to go to a similar service, so long as they feel that they do not get a fair wage and a due recompense for their work."[2]

This witness is true. But the justice and sympathy which he has in view as the condition of a revival, are even more its abiding consequences when it really means, as it ought to do, incandescent devotion to the Mastership of Jesus Christ.

3. Another element which is inevitably required in any such development of Christianity as will meet

[1] "Christianity won the Empire by that in it which was higher and more morally effective than what could be found in other faiths."—Dr. Vernon Bartlet.

[2] Rev. F. B. Meyer, at City Road Church, Bristol.

the needs of the age, is the definite insistence upon curative aims and methods, in addition to all the palliative efforts now so earnestly adopted. As intimated above, every Christian Church, and especially every one of the great Missions in the cities, is a centre of help and healing, a refuge and home for the distressed, such as is not, nor ever has been, found anywhere else. Yet however much this work merits our sympathy and support, it must be recognized that at best and utmost it is all merely palliative. What is wanted is the curative. How many of the unemployed, homeless, distressed, forlorn, despairing applicants for help, come into their sorry plight really through their own sin and folly, cannot be told. But it is pitifully safe to say that the majority of them do not. Drink, for instance, is the most often quoted cause of wretchedness. But Mr. Chas. Booth's careful investigations in London showed that in the vast number of cases of abject poverty which he traced out, only some 13 per cent were due to drink, whilst not less than 55 per cent were due to unemployment and illness. All too long have religious people left these and other such tragic causes of human woe, to economists and politicians. Even yet there are sincere "spiritual" fanatics who would ban their consideration under any religious auspices. Sermons especially, we are told, must have no reference to social or political matters, because this would be a departure from "the evangelical simplicity" of the Gospel. Of a truth the "Gospel" as preached by some such advocates, has been too simple by half. The men around us who are so conspicuously absent from the Churches, hold aloof because they have failed to find in such simplicity any real good tidings like those which Jesus claimed to announce; or any practical antidote to the injustices and oppressions which weigh so heavily

upon the proletariat in modern civilization. The deadly Upas tree of social and commercial and civic convention, under whose fell branches myriads are perishing, has roots, and until the axe of equity and brotherhood is laid to these roots, the murderous miasma will continue to poison its victims. If there be any application at all to Christian ideals and promises of the Apocalyptic figure that "the leaves of the Tree of Life are for the healing of the nations," assuredly never was that application so much needed as now. On the part of the true disciple of Jesus there can be no hesitation in affirming that any revival of religion which does not consecrate its devotees to stern conflict against social evils, as earnestly as against individual spiritual wrong, must be to a lamentable extent a failure. The late Dr. Punshon left no one in doubt as to his Evangelical sympathies. Yet he anticipated, some forty years ago, both the development of social sympathy in the Churches and the unmeasured need for it, when he wrote :—

Chivalry's was cruel splendour,
  There are nobler conflicts now ;
Worthier shrines at which to render
  Manhood's faith and valour's vow.
Still the trampled nature calleth
  For the valiant heart and hand ;
Ready whatsoe'er befalleth,
  In the deadly breach to stand.

When the famine-stricken languish,
  Pining through the hopeless years ;
Where grim laughter masks an anguish,
  Far more terrible than tears ;
Where o'er all the fated city,
  Sorrow's ceaseless sable hangs ;
Where the helpless wail for pity,
  Where the martyrs hide their pangs.

Christian soldier, rise and arm thee,
Take the Spirit's sevenfold shield ;
Let no coward fears alarm thee
Recreant from this solemn field.
Fiercer than the fabled giants,
Are thy foes of want, and crime ;
God thy helper, men thy clients,
Haste thee to the strife sublime.

4. Such a recognition of the need of curative measures for social ills in the name of the Christian religion, brings with it also a deeper sense than ever of the need of individual prevention as well as social cure. The mystery of human nature will doubtless continue to baffle all attempts at the amelioration of society from without, i.e. by means of economic schemes and legal powers. No wise social reformer dreams of curing all the ills of civilization "by dead lift". Human character has to be reckoned with, in the last resort. And character has to be moulded, seeing that it cannot be made. Practically, the only time for such moulding is during youth. That is why the real awakening of the Churches to the sense of their responsibilities and opportunities, must be such as will put unmeasured increase of emphasis on the Christian training of the young, in all the three necessary departments of home, daily school, and Sunday school. There is no lack of appreciation of all the good at present working through these, when it is deliberately affirmed that no one of them is what it needs to be for present Christian purposes.

The notion that children are naturally corrupt, and must play the prodigal and be converted before they can be sure of Divine Fatherhood, still miserably holds in some religious circles; whereas the home ought ever to be the sanctuary in which the children—whom Paul well calls "holy" from their

birth—may be irreversibly trained in the consciousness of Christian discipleship. The nation's day schools, thanks to clerical bigotry, are becoming increasingly closed to religious teaching, and there is no prospect of any enlightened harmony in this regard. Sunday schools, therefore, become more important than ever. Nor does any portion of Christian work need more the quickening influence of genuine revival. Not, as already said above, that they are fainting or falling. But that, to speak generally, they sorely need improving and developing. The good elements in them, which no one denies, are not nearly good enough for the present age, however valuable the service which they have thus far rendered. It were easy to point out wherein they fail, but such detail is not here necessary. In this realm, as in all others, the difficulty of wise development lies in the cost. But in the course of the genuine revival of Christendom, there would be no lack either of wisdom to direct or of devotion to energize such betterness of method and spirit as would make Sunday schools real nurseries of faith. Only so is there any hope of stopping the leakage, which now lamentably prevails, away into the world of Godlessness.

As curative measures in face of society's ills are ever better than palliative, so are preventive better than curative. It is quite possible to make too much of the mending of "broken earthenware" in Christian service. It is immeasurably better to save from breaking, than to mend when broken. There may not be so much of the sensational, but there is more of the really valuable and permanent. The case of the prodigal son, we may repeat, has been dangerously emphasized. Whether the elder brother was perfect or not, is irrelevant. What is wanted above all else is such a revival of Christ's spirit everywhere, as shall fill both homes and churches with young men

who, modestly yet manfully, can look their truly Christian fathers in the face and say each one—"These many years do I serve thee, and I never yet transgressed a commandment of thine".

5. But it is time to ask plainly the question which every suggestion as to the true elements of a revival makes more imperative, viz. How is such an awakening and development to come to pass? It is here that the truth which is most true, is often, amongst religious people at all events, least welcome. The general attitude is fairly expressed in a verse taken from the Acts of the Apostles, as rendered in the Old Version, where the Apostles are credited with saying:—

> "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, *when the times of refreshing shall come* from the presence of the Lord."

The lesson of which undoubtedly is, as so many are content to take it, that the needed revival is waiting for God to do something special and wonderful, and when that happens all will be well. The main duty of the Church, in such case, is said to be to "wait upon God"; much in the same way as in the same Version the importunate widow is represented as waiting upon the unjust judge. It is a very pious conception; but it is pitifully misleading. For not only is the rendering in Acts III. 19, as inaccurate as the misunderstanding of Luke XVIII. 1-8 is lamentable, but the corresponding inference is wholly unwarranted. It is no less mischievous and hindering for being supported by popular public utterances and occasional lines in hymns. Not long since a well-known preacher declared to a large audience that the supreme need of the hour was

"simple faith in the omnipotence of God . . . in the overwhelming power of Christ". This also is exactly what is implied, if only congregations thought what they were singing, in the familiar lines of an otherwise inspiring hymn of Ebenezer Elliott :—

> When wilt *Thou* save the people,
> O God of mercy, when ?

But whether such words are popular and pleasing or not, must here be left out of account. They are not true. They are indeed doubly worse than untrue. For they malign the character of God, no less than they underrate the duty and responsibility of man. The better rendering of the above passage in the Revised Version, clearly shows what is the great lesson to be learned.

> "Repent ye, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that *so there may come* seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

Here the plain truth looks us in the face, which not only saves the Divine character from being put upon a level with that of the unjust judge, but reminds us that the whole revival which is included in the comprehensive term "seasons of refreshing," is not waiting for God at all, but for men. "Repent . . . that so there may come."

The omnipotence of God, in very deed, has nothing at all to do with it. In so far as a real revival of religion involves moral and spiritual character, omnipotence has no application to it. If by sheer power God could "save (all) the people," would He not at this very hour do so ? With all reverence, because all truth, it must be said, that such a line as that above quoted, is as cruel towards God as it

would be to entreat a mother, hanging with heart-ache over a fever-smitten child and doing everything she knew for its relief, to save her child. It is strange that good people do not see that attribution of such power to God, however well-meant, is really a libel on the love of God. If He could save all the people from their sins and follies, and consequent sufferings, apart from themselves—i.e. by some stroke of omnipotence—and would not, does not, He becomes inevitably the infinite monster whom J. S. Mill said he would rather go to hell than worship. How different was the attitude of Christ Himself, His own tearful words bear witness. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, . . . and ye would not." The helplessness of God in face of persistent moral evil may provoke other inquiries, but it is a truth which is not more undeniable in fact than far-reaching in its import towards men and women, whether in the Church or out of it.

The great double truth which follows upon recognition of all the facts of human nature and the main principles of the Gospel of Jesus, is marvellously under-rated alike by believers and unbelievers. It is, first, that in the realm of grace even more markedly than in nature, the way of human benediction is the way of co-operation with the Divine. As moral beings, we are so constituted that God can no more save any man without himself, than the man can save himself without God. Secondly; in all such co-operation, it is always true that the Divine part is waiting for the human, not the human waiting for the Divine. Even in inorganic nature the principle holds good. All the conveniences of our modern life which have become practical necessities, work by laws which have been waiting from prehistoric times for man to discover and obey. As

soon as he obeys them, they serve him; but not one moment before. It is an inadequate illustration, but a true analogue of what happens in the realm of grace. In the spiritual relation of moral beings to God, it is even more true that it is He who is always waiting for the Churches; not the Churches for Him.

Indeed both the usual representations of conventional religion herein are wrong. It is neither true that as workers together with Him we have to wait until He has done some new marvel; nor that by importunate pleading we have to coerce Him into doing what we desire. His part towards human benediction is always done; His best is already given; His utmost is always anticipating ours. If there be failure, it is the human not the Divine element which is lacking. The more stress is laid upon Pentecost by Christian faith, the less warranted is any prayer for the "outpouring" of the Spirit. When fairly considered, such a phrase, however sincere, is as unhelpful as untrue. All that Pentecost signified is perennial. It has never been either reversed or diminished. What is needed is the response to the Apostolic word—"Work out your own salvation with all your might, for it is God who is working in you both to will and to do according to His gracious purpose".

6. It is thus the human part in the co-operation with the Divine, which calls for largest emphasis. When it is asked how can such a revival be brought about as will not merely save souls—in the fullest sense—or add members to the Churches, but establish on earth a Kingdom of Heaven which will put an end to the tragedies of civilization and make life worth living for every man, the answer is an application of natural law to the spiritual world.

The position is virtually the same in religion as in science. For the latter, the only royal road of progress is by means of three factors: the acquisition of knowledge; its general application to human affairs; and the personal adoption of such application in daily life. So too in the realm of spiritual evolution. Any revival which is to bring a genuine deepening and strengthening of the hold of Christ's Gospel on modern society, must proceed upon three definite lines. On these, and upon no other, will there be any twentieth century approach towards "making the world Christian". These three main principles are (i) the clearing and intensifying of conviction; (ii) the development of corresponding character; and (iii) the working out of that character in actual effort. Otherwise expressed, it is the revival of Christian belief, Christian holiness, Christian effort, in all those who are attached to the Churches, which alone holds any promise of increasing potency for modern Christianity. Without attempting elaboration, it seems necessary to state succinctly what each of these really means.

(i) Revival in conviction.

"Diffused Christianity," it may freely be conceded, is more in evidence than ever. But so too is "spiritual inertia". And the former has but little effect upon the latter. The only dynamic sufficient to remove spiritual inertia is personal conviction. It may be more or less intellectual, but real it must be. This, alas! is precisely what it is not, throughout half Christendom. That which brings vast numbers to one religious service on a Sunday—and often next to nothing more—is an indescribable blend of personal, family, social, conventional elements, all of which put together would only yield a halting and superficial answer to Christ's own direct inquiry —"Do you believe on the Son of God?" Christen-

dom to-day is not only broader than ever, but thinner. There is not only less impassioned faith, but more unspoken doubt. Not that this is either strange or necessarily fatal to faith. It would be strange indeed if it were otherwise. Modern Christianity has to reckon with the far-reaching developments of modern science; the resistless progress of historical criticism; the ever-increasing cheap anti-Christian propagandism through the press; the exhausting pressure of competitive business life; the weary monotony or cruel tyranny under which myriads of white slaves have yet to toil; the correlated craving for more or less exciting amusements; the general restlessness and ferment of the social and political environment. These all, not simply added but multiplied together, make a total more unfavourable to definite Christian conviction than any age has ever yet witnessed since the Christian era dawned. So comes it to pass that in this respect the Churches are half full of weaklings who scarcely know what they believe, and certainly do not know why they believe it.[1] Upon which Prof. Seeley's comment is

[1] A paragraph from Mr. Peile's Bampton Lectures puts the case so forcefully that it merits special quotation. "Here, I think, we touch again upon one at least of the causes of failure we are seeking. If I may use a somewhat bold metaphor—which has, if you will think of it, a very high authority—the cunning spirit of the world takes the ferment which worked such radical changes in the constitution of the human soul, and by inoculating Society at large with a very dilute and attenuated serum, secures for it a measure of immunity from violent and inconvenient attacks. The result is only too familiar to us all. In any nation or class where Christianity is an inherited habit, or an accepted convention which every one takes as a matter of course, the normal religious experience of the individual is a very mild and manageable form of the fever which consumed St. Paul, and wrung from him the agonized cry—'wretched man that I am; who will deliver me from this body of death?' We find what is called average Christianity acting as a protection against enthusiasm, a positive obstacle to genuine conversion" (p. 155).

undeniably warranted—"That the fruits of a Christianity so hollow should be poor and sickly, is not surprising".[1]

Christianity, to deserve the name, must rest upon a rock, even as Jesus Himself said. Furthermore it would be useless that the Church should be built upon a rock, if the rock itself were only poised in air. Certain modern critical vapourings as to whether the Christ of the Gospels ever existed, would be fatal indeed to Christianity, if there were any substance in them. Happily, there is not. They will go the way of the Tübingen school which troubled the Christian peace of the mid-nineteenth century. But leaving this vagary out of account, there are many and real changes in Christian doctrine which are simply inevitable. In regard to these we are at present in the transition state which involves difficulty, if not uncertainty, for preachers, and uncertainty, if not unbelief, for their hearers. Hence comes the feebleness of conviction, based upon the lack of understanding, which is one principal cause of the apparent failure of present-day Christianity. Here, then, must begin the needed revival of real religion. Taking Christendom as a whole, there is no greater need in these days than the definite forming, or firm renewing, of such a personal conviction as Luke sought to bring about in the mind of Theophilus—"that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed".

"Certainty" here means, and need only mean, general reliability. A wide margin may be left to theological variation without impairing the reality, the significance, the unique impressiveness of the Christ of the Gospels, and the main principles of Apostolic teaching. "Personal," in this connexion has a twofold meaning. Conviction needs to be

[1] "Ecce Homo," cheap edition, p. 59.

personal, as distinct from the nebulous aggregate belief which is assumed on the part of a congregation. Whether the creed be recited or not, it is one thing to intone "Our Father which art in Heaven"—and another thing to say, with any approach to truthfulness, "I believe in God the Father Almighty". In another sense also conviction must be personal. To be conviction at all, it must be distinguished from all religious notions, or half beliefs, which have been obtained second-hand, borrowed, copied, echoed from other sources, parental, friendly or social. As living and influential religion in any Church, can only arise from the conjoined devotion of real Christians who are living units of force, not worthless ciphers; so can such real Christians only be grown upon downright personal conviction.

For this conviction there must as surely be an intelligent and rational basis, whatever becomes of emotion, as there must be a solid lime-ball for the brilliance of the incandescent lime-light. Emotional religion without foundation in fact and guidance by reason, may easily result in mere fanatic and foolish frenzy, as history has shown lamentably enough. Religious experience, to be anything better than a castle in the air, must emanate from convictions which are rock-based on actual fact and rational inference. Here, as Jesus Himself and the Apostles never failed to insist, must be at least the beginning of the truly Christian life. Nor is anything more needed, or truly so much needed, in modern Christendom, as the formation or renewal of the modest but firm conviction which can unhesitatingly declare to all concerned—"I know Him whom I believed". Without this, a revival will be but the noisy flash of a rocket, rather than the rising of the sun.

(ii) Equally great and inseparable from the foregoing, is the present need of revival in genuine Christian character. That which men really believe

they act upon. From half-belief naturally results the half-character which is the most serious source of leakage and loss in Christendom. An imperfect or inconsistent Christian is doubtless a Christian still; even as an invalid is certainly human. But how much work does an invalid do? And how much influence does the Church member or adherent with a half-Christian character wield, in the modern fight for righteousness? A wholly sympathetic observer has described the present situation thus :—

> "The workman observes that the Christian employer who in his private life is prominent in religious and even philanthropic activities, is to him just as hard and exacting as the man who professes no belief; and he is being taught also to observe that the Church has for many years opposed every reform which has benefited the mass of the population; and looked coldly on efforts outside legislation to improve the condition of the labouring class, such as the temperance movement; neglecting and thwarting them in their earlier stages, and only patronizing and exploiting them when they have established themselves without its aid." . . .

This view could be only too easily substantiated from the record of events in this country during the last century. Excepting the noble efforts made by F. D. Maurice, Chas. Kingsley, Tom Hughes and the "Christian Socialists," what did Christian Churches, as such, do for the practical "salvation" of the people?

But it may be asked, is not Christian character to-day on the whole good? And the answer is, Yes; —but not good enough. It is on the whole better than it has ever been. But that is largely irrelevant. For Christianity and the Churches are not in the world to make men good, but, as we have seen in

the preceding section, to make men *extra* good, i.e. holy.

There can be no manner of doubt that it was this extra goodness, this "higher-toned" character, which gave early Christianity its victories. Its essential features are well expressed in the ancient letter to Diognetus, and the apology of Athenagoras.

Says the former, concerning his fellow Christians of that time :—

> "They obey the established laws and they surpass the laws in their own lives. They love all men, though they are persecuted by all. They are reviled and they bless; they are insulted and they show respect; what the soul is in the body, this the Christians are in the world. Dost thou not see them being thrown to wild beasts that they may deny the Lord, and yet they are not overcome? These look not like the works of man: they are the proof of His presence."

And Athenagoras writes :—

> "Among us you will find uneducated persons and artisans and old women, who if they are unable to prove in words the benefit of our doctrine, yet by their deeds they exhibit the benefit arising from their persuasion of its truth. They do not rehearse speeches, but exhibit good works; when struck, they do not strike again; when robbed, they do not go to law; they give to those who ask of them; and love their neighbours as themselves."

Or listen again, for a moment, to Justin Martyr :—

> "We who formerly hated and destroyed one another and on account of their different manners would not use a common hearth and

> fire with men of a different tribe, now, since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them, and pray for our enemies, and endeavour to persuade those who hate us unjustly to live conformably to the good precepts of Jesus Christ, so that they may become partakers with us of the same joyful hope of a reward from God the Ruler of all."

Where, one is driven to ask, is the counterpart of this in our midst? It is presented on the stage sometimes even more effectively than in pulpits. But is "The passing of the third floor back" re-enacted in modern actual church life? We know that it is not. It is to be feared that Prof. Seeley was wrong when he added, after the sentence quoted above in regard to the existence of the higher-toned goodness—"Few will maintain that it has been exceedingly rare". Alas! it is just that which many do now maintain; and, in simple honesty it must be admitted, with much truth. But about one thing there is no possibility of mistake. Be the Churches many or few; rich or poor; established or unestablished; Ritualistic or Puritanical; it is character that tells. The multiplication of costly buildings and erection of colossal structures at which crowds may gape, are, after all, trifles compared with the influence of character. It is and it will be, let come what may come, with the servants as with their Lord. Jesus conquered the world by character; and by the unique goodness and potency of that character He yet rules the hearts of men, as utterly as Napoleon and Lecky confessed.

It is the application of this principle of regeneration by character, which alone can save modern civilization from becoming a mixture of Armageddon and Pandemonium. This, nothing less, and nothing else,

is the ultimate mission of Christianity. Conventional religion may drag on, by sheer force of the human instinct for worship. But it will never be the salt of the earth or the light of the world. The Christianity which does not produce *the noblest character on earth*, is an everlasting failure. The true Christian is the incarnation in personal character of the Apostolic summary :—

> "Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are honourable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are of good repute—if there be anything noble or praiseworthy, dwell upon these things."

But is it so, that the name of "Christian" is a synonym for all these? Or does the fruit of the Spirit, as the same Apostle described it to the Galatians, abound in every Christian home, or every Christian Church? Is it a libel, or a true indictment, when the modern opponent so loudly declares that Christianity does not make men lead better lives than others lead who are not Christians? Let us hope it is a libel; for if it were true, the vocation of Christianity would be gone. Whatever therefore may become of Conventions, Congresses, Missions, Mass meetings and the like, the only revival which is worth hoping for, or praying for, from the Christian standpoint, is that which will cause the average Christian character to exceed in all goodness the non-Christian, as truly as the light of noon exceeds the grey of the dawn or the dusk of the evening.

(iii) One special feature of such a revival demands separate notice. All noble character will find more or less expression in action. True, the influence of noble character is often actionless. As Seeley put it, the man who is Christian indeed exhibits a

"character of such elevation that his mere presence has shamed the bad and made the good better, and has been felt at times like the presence of God Himself". But in a world like this, something more than the "mere presence" is often absolutely necessary. *Facta, non verba*, is the only sufficient maxim for the carrying out of Christian purpose in the complexities of daily life. Cardinal Newman was well warranted when he wrote—

> Faith's meanest deed more favour bears,
> Where hearts and wills are weighed ;
> Than highest transports, choicest prayers,
> Which bloom their hour and fade.

Nothing can becloud the plainness of Christ's own doctrine hereupon. "Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have not done it unto Me"—are strong words which find their echo on every page of the New Testament. But in the Churches, up to the present time, the actual work of all kinds is done by the few, not by the many. Physicists tell us that after all the cost and risk and loss of life incurred in getting coal from dreary mines, we only utilize about one-tenth of the heat energy that it contains. Which is tragedy enough, considering all the horror and suffering which attach to colliery accidents. But it is an equal spiritual tragedy—if half what is sung in hymns about the Cross be true—that not one-tenth of the real potentiality of the Christian Church for the blessing of humanity is being employed. It is not too much to say that every Church in the land could be more than filled, if avowed Christians really wished it. Prolonged discussions have been held at times as to the conditions of Church membership. But if the New Testament is to count for anything, the best and only sufficient test of Christian membership is service. In regard to the body, Paul

spoke out plainly—"If any man will not work, neither let him eat". In the realm of the higher life the corresponding principle should hold good—"if any man will not serve, neither let him count". There is no more room for easy-going do-nothings in Christian Churches, than for marionettes in a regiment of soldiers. The revival, therefore, for which Church and world are waiting, is one which will cause every man and woman who bears the Christian name, to do his or her best and utmost in actual service. We are frequently told that such and such events constitute "a call to prayer". It is often much more true that it is a call to work that is indicated. There may just as well be too much prayer as too little. There is no truer line in any hymn than one which affirms that

> Work shall be prayer, if all be wrought
> As Thou would'st have it done.

Praying, wishing, singing, preaching, talking, may all have their valuable function in helping the Kingdom of Heaven to come in modern Europe. But come it never will, unless these also take shape in the actual doing of what duty demands or philanthropy suggests. Emotion without effort leads only to a mirage. The revival most needed is that which will put greatest stress upon the Master's unequivocal utterances—"If any man will do His will, he shall know".—"Whosoever shall do and teach, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of God".

7. When all that the greatly-needed awakening and developing of modern Christianity involves is pondered, the question cannot but arise "Who is sufficient for these things?" It is more than possible that one may be asked what is the use of putting

forth such a counsel of perfection as cannot be attained? The answer to which may be at once simple and direct. In all that is here suggested as the crying need of modern Christianity, there is no counsel of perfection; nor is there anything at all unattainable. The Christian Church can have such a revival whenever it chooses. The only hindrance is the cost. That is confessedly inevitable. Yet it is but the modern form of the Cross without which Jesus declared His discipleship to be impossible. Thoughtful study of the foundations of faith, especially in the fierce light of modern criticism, is certainly much more costly than just coming to services where everything Christian is assumed without question. Self-restraint from evil, self-denial in luxurious opportunity, self-mastery in face of passionate temptation, are much more costly than mere attendance at a popular mission. Downright personal decision and maintained resolution for the highest, in deed, as well as word, are immeasurably more costly than nominal Church membership, or even official position in a Christian Church. But along such a rugged path, and nowhere else, lies the road to reality. As for—

> "The idea that religion is a separate and intermittent activity, confined to its own times and places, claiming at most one part of our life and leaving the rest to other activities in which it has no share, and the idea that it is a method of escaping deserved punishment by the use of prescribed formulas and ceremonies—

our gentle yet fearlessly-outspoken Lecturer rightly calls these "superstitions," and adds, as the greatest and most needed lesson for modern Christendom—

> "Real Christianity has nothing in common with them; it is not accommodating or indulgent;

> it will not wait upon our leisure, or condone our pleasant vices: but inexorably demands the whole of our being, emotion, will, and intellect; the whole of our life, thought, speech, action; and thereby declares itself a revolutionary force; so revolutionary that it can afford to leave human institutions unaltered for the moment."

All this, it will be observed, shows, as above insisted, how the Divine waits for the human. Such a demand as real Christianity makes, is not contingent upon the love of God, but upon man's response to that love. The revival for want of which Christianity languishes, is not lingering for want of fresh revelations of Divine truth and grace, but by reason of the poor appreciation and half-hearted reciprocation of what is already avowedly known. This is at once the explanation of Christianity's comparative failure in the past, and the measure of the hope of its larger triumph for the future.

That is why all suggestions relative to a "Second Coming of Christ" which imply some sudden celestial outburst are delusive and mischievous; however sincerely founded upon particular "passages" of Scripture. The only Millennium worth thinking about from the Christian standpoint, is such as will naturally result from a real and thorough awakening of the Christian Church to its own privileges, duties, powers, and responsibilities. That awakening cannot come to pass by Divine decree, or be rushed by Omnipotence. Its essence is the genuine response of moral beings to high and noble appeal. Appeal is the nearest approach to compulsion that can be applied to a moral being. That is why the last two thousand years have witnessed so imperfect a leavening of human hearts, cities, and nations, by the doctrine and example of Jesus Christ.

It has always been possible for human beings, both within and without the Church, to say—"we will not have this Man to reign over us". It must always be so; whilst man remains man. Progress in the spiritual realm, like that in the realm of nature, is by evolution not revolution. The sudden jutting up of some volcanic island in mid ocean, is but a trifle, compared with the slow but sure and resistless upheaval of continents which is ever being indicated by the gradual but unmistakable alterations in our coast line. So too is the real amelioration of human society, the purification and ennoblement of civilization, rather a work of centuries than of ten days' missions. It is, after all, more dependent upon the little than the great; even as the peace and safety which obtain within the coral atoll, are the result not of any volcanic eruption but of the ceaseless tiny labours of millions upon millions of infinitesimal workers.

Mr. Hall Caine has said that "Socialism is Christianity in a hurry". As a suggestion prompted by the crying need of social reform, it may stand. But as a fact, it is untrue. For real Christianity is never in a hurry. It has no need to be. It cannot be. The leaven must have time to work. No hammers can expedite it. No blast of trumpets can increase its vital force. Jesus Himself showed no sign of haste. Nor need His followers, if only they were true to Him. The old Evangelical cry about "snatching poor souls out of the fire"—was a crude figure taken from a narrow theology, not a true statement of the commission given to the Churches. The appeal from character to character will always tell, is always telling; but in its own way, and at its own pace. Its apparent slowness is the measure of its sureness. Spiritual character, whether in a man, or a church, or a nation, must have time to

gather momentum. But when that is reached, it is the mightiest power that makes for righteousness in this human world.

8. If it be deemed at all discouraging thus to recognize the inevitable cost and slowness of the only revival which is adequate to the need of modern Christianity, there is also plenty of reason for encouragement, when the heart of the matter is reached. For, as Prof. Rauschenbusch has well said :—

> "The kingdom of God is always coming. But every approximation to it is worth while. Every step towards personal purity and peace, though it only makes the consciousness of imperfection more poignant, carries its own exceeding great reward, and everlasting pilgrimage towards the kingdom of God is far better than contented stability in the tents of wickedness."[1]

If human progress by evolution seems depressingly tardier than by revolution, it has at least this most comforting and inspiring advantage, that therein every one counts. From the invaluable work just quoted, let us listen to yet another sentence which deserves to be writ large in letters of gold :—

> "The greatest contribution which any man can make to the social movement—i.e. to the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth—is the contribution of a regenerated personality, of a will which sets justice above policy and profit, and of an intellect emancipated from falsehood. Such a man will in some measure incarnate the prin-

[1] "Christianity and the Social Crisis," p. 421. A work which richly merits the careful study of every thoughtful Christian. As a summary of the present situation, on Christian lines, it cannot be surpassed.

ciples of a higher social order in his attitude to all questions, and in all his relations to men, and will be a well-spring of regenerating influences."[1]

Perhaps no words whatever can better express the mainspring of inspiration which inheres in revival by spiritual evolution, than those uttered by Jesus Himself in connexion with His rebuke of the narrowness of John's conception of helpful service :—

> "He that is not against us is for us. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, I solemnly tell you that he will certainly not lose his reward."[2]

It is to be feared that the real significance and unmeasured stimulus of these words have too often been lost by unwarranted postponement. They have no reference to what shall be hereafter; but put vivid emphasis upon what even here and now attaches to every effort which involves the utmost for the highest. Nothing indeed can exceed the comfort of such assurance, when justice is done to its double meaning. The very least service here becomes the ground of the very highest encouragement. What can be less, so far as earth's measurements are concerned, than this "cup of water"—which is, of course, merely a figure of speech adapted to a drier, hotter clime than ours. It really stands for any little homely, kindly act. This will vary in form according to circumstances, but in heart will simply mean such love and sympathy as are always possible to the weakest and poorest.

But the present reward is as great as sure. It is no less than the consciousness of helping God. God who cannot compel human nature into the communion for which His love yearns, can be helped in

[1] p. 351. [2] Mark IX. 41.

His great purpose towards mankind, by character even in the smallest degree like Himself. One of the very best statements of this Divine principle comes from a most unlikely source. John Stuart Mill was well known as a man of powerful intellect, and strongly opposed to most Christian beliefs and sanctions. He sought to justify his attitude in "Three Essays on Religion," of which the last, on Theism, is most pronounced in its departure from "orthodoxy". Yet strange to say, at the conclusion of that very essay, we find this remarkable deliverance in regard to what he terms the future "religion of humanity".

> "To the other inducements for cultivating a religious devotion to the welfare of our fellow-creatures as an obligatory limit to every selfish aim, and an end for the direct promotion of which no sacrifice can be too great, it superadds the feeling that in making this the rule of our life we may be co-operating with the unseen Being to whom we owe all that is enjoyable in life. One elevated feeling this form of religious idea admits of, is the feeling of helping God—of requiting the good He has given, by a voluntary co-operation which He, not being omnipotent, really needs, and by which a somewhat nearer approach may be made to the fulfilment of His purposes. To do something during life, on even the humblest scale, if nothing more is within reach, towards bringing this consummation ever so little nearer, is the most animating and invigorating thought which can inspire a human creature; and that it is destined, with or without supernatural sanctions, to be the religion of the future, I cannot entertain a doubt."

The Christian believer need not be troubled by the giving up of Divine omnipotence in this connec-

tion; for it is perfectly true when applied to moral beings, as above intimated. God does need human help in a human environment, because we are men and not marionettes. Neither men nor marionettes can be made to love. But the difference between them is as immeasurable as significant. In the latter case it is absolutely hopeless, for there is no love capacity in a thing. But in the former it is more than hopeful, for no one can say when and how love may beget love in a person—where love is always possible. When all is said and done, the glowing words of the Apostle recur with never-failing force—"Now abide faith, hope, love, these three, and the greatest of these is love".

In shortest possible phrase, the revival most of all now needed, is the revival of the knowledge of the love of God as revealed to men in Jesus Christ. There are many hindrances, complications, difficulties, but the one and only panacea for them all is love. He who loves most, helps God most. Nor can there be in any heart that has learnt anything of Jesus Christ, a more real, abiding, sufficient inspiration and reward, than to know that in the least act of loving service he is contributing to the moral and spiritual evolution which is ultimately the only hope of civilization; and that in so doing he is actually helping God to fulfil His highest and tenderest purposes towards humanity. He who daily lives and labours with that truth throbbing in his soul, will know, as no verbal exposition could ever teach him, what Jesus meant when He said—"He who follows me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life;" and will enter unspeakably into the experience of John when he wrote—"This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith."

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